

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 06826626 5



THE INTERPRETER

WASHINGTON GLADDEN

★ PUBLISHERS' WEEKLY FEB 20 1913

THE INTERPRETER

THE INTERPRETER

BY
WASHINGTON GLADDEN, D.D.

Author of

“*Present-Day Theology*,” “*The Labor Question*,” “*Ultima Veritas*”
“*Being a Christian*,” “*The Christian Way*,” “*The Practice
of Immortality*,” “*The School of Life*”



THE PILGRIM PRESS

BOSTON

CHICAGO

69475
GODS
STOP, LENOX AND
LAWRENCE, 1918
1914

COPYRIGHT 1918
BY FRANK M. SHELDON

THE PILGRIM PRESS
BOSTON

To
The Congregational Churches

in whose ministry I have served for fifty-eight years; who gave me the right to preach the Gospel; who have given me, through all these years, the sympathy and encouragement of friendly hearers, and have furnished me, by their faithful living, with my strongest reasons for believing that the Gospel is true, these pages are affectionately inscribed.

PREFATORY NOTE

Some of us who used to read Samuel Taylor Coleridge sixty years ago have not forgotten that this philosopher and poet was educated for the ministry. One day he asked Charles Lamb, "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" "No one ever heard you do anything else," said Lamb.

The humorist's confession is my boast. I have never tried to do anything else but preach. I have had no other ambition. If I can preach the highest truth I know clearly and convincingly, that, I know, will be the best service I can render to my kind.

I have never underestimated my function as a preacher. There is no higher function. The greatest among us have been preachers. Abraham Lincoln was, from first to last, a preacher of righteousness. Theodore Roosevelt won his power as a preacher. The greatest preacher of this century is Woodrow Wilson. I should like to be counted worthy to be of their company.

The preacher does well to magnify his office. He has great matters to deal with and he should not belittle them. It is not necessary to simplify truth overmuch. Even unlearned people, and young people, like to have their intelligence taken for granted by the preacher.

There is going to be a call, before many days, for a good deal of good preaching. The preacher of righteousness is put in trust with certain truths which the world greatly needs just now; let us hope that they will be spoken with power.

WASHINGTON GLADDEN.

COLUMBUS,
February 25, 1918.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I THE INTERPRETER.....	3
II WORLDS IN THE MAKING	23
III THE GREAT ADVENTURE.....	43
IV GOD IN THE GARDEN	63
V LOYALTY.....	81
VI THE LORD GOD IS A SUN	99
VII THE ELIXIR.....	115
VIII A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION.....	131
IX THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS.....	151
X THE JOY OF THE LORD	169
XI PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST.....	189
XII OUTDOOR RELIGION.....	205
XIII THE CALL OF THE DEEP.....	221
XIV BLESSING AND BANNING	239
XV THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM.....	257

I
THE INTERPRETER

I

THE INTERPRETER

“Wherefore, let him that speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret.” —I Cor. 14:13.

The speaking with tongues, which Paul is here discussing, is an obscure matter. The commentators explain it variously. The people of Corinth apparently regarded it as a remarkable sign of the presence of God in their lives — as one of distinguishing gifts of the Spirit. It would seem that those supposing themselves to have received this gift were proud of it, and wanted to exercise it, in season and out of season. Sometimes when these possessors of tongues came together they all wanted to speak at once, so that there was great disorder. People with tongues are sometimes accused of that in these days. This was a sure sign, Paul suggests, that it was not the Spirit of God who was prompting them; for “God is not a God of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the Saints.”

Precisely what the nature of this gift was is difficult to say. Probably it was not any miraculous proficiency in the use of a foreign language; it was simply a voluble utterance of sounds which had no significance either to the

THE INTERPRETER

mind of the speaker or to the ear of the listener, but was the spontaneous utterance of a perfervid emotion. The feelings were stirred, the nerves were excited and the voice poured forth a torrent of vocables. Such phenomena are not rare. We have people in our own day who give us illustrations of this kind of religion; they claim to speak with tongues and to inherit the gifts that the Christians at Corinth had. Perhaps they do. I am inclined to believe that the Corinthians were under neurotic rather than spiritual influence.

In Nashville, two years ago, I attended a Sunday evening service of a sect of very ignorant negroes who are known as the Jumpers. They are very religious, and their religious experience comes to its climax when members of the congregation rise to their feet and begin to jump into the air frantically, leaping as high as they can, and continuing the saltation until they fall down exhausted. They were being stirred up to this manifestation by a speaker who was in full volley when I entered the room. I think that he was probably speaking with tongues. He was orating in a high key, with tremendous volubility, his sentences often culminating in a shout or a scream; he was gesticulating violently; he was rushing back and forth across the platform, but I do not think that he was saying anything, or thought that he was. Now and then a Scriptural word or phrase, or a pious ejaculation, or a Biblical name would be mingled with his torrent of vocables, but I am sure that no ideas of any description were conveyed by them; no-

THE INTERPRETER

body was listening for ideas; the sensibilities of the audience were being played upon by the tone of the voice and the exhibitions of excited feeling. Presently a woman in one of the pews just in front of me sprang up and began to jump; she jumped until she was exhausted, and had to be laid down in a pew and fanned; the exciting cause had produced its natural effect.

That, I have no doubt, was substantially the same kind of phenomenon that Paul was dealing with in Corinth. He does not seem to know exactly what he ought to say about it; he does not wholly discredit it; he does not deny that it may be the operation of the Spirit; but he evidently wishes to make the Corinthians see that it is at best an inferior and secondary sign of the Spirit's presence, an emotional luxury to be sparingly indulged in. He says that the man who speaks with tongues may edify himself, but that he edifies nobody else, and that therefore he had better wait till he gets home and practise on himself — a shrewd counsel; for that is precisely what he is not likely to do. He says that prophesying (by which he means simply preaching or speaking intelligible words) is far more profitable than this rhapsodic elocution; "I had rather speak five words with my understanding that I might instruct others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue."

It would seem that there were some among the Corinthians who deemed themselves able to interpret these tongues — to make sense of these incoherencies. The

THE INTERPRETER

subjects of this visitation were not, themselves, ordinarily able to give any idea of what they were saying, but some of their neighbors thought they could do so. They were "interpreters of tongues." They supposed themselves able to give some meaning to these emotional outpourings. And Paul says that if only some meaning can be given to them, they may prove helpful. By all means, therefore, he urges, let us have the interpretation. Let us have no talking with tongues unless we have the interpretation following. And let every man who speaketh in a tongue pray that he may interpret.

The uses of the interpreter are thus brought before our minds. The function of interpretation is one of the great human functions. The precise kind of interpretation with which Paul is dealing is not, indeed, a familiar business. To interpret what a man is saying when he himself does not know what he is saying is an enterprise to which none of us would wish to be called. It is like those tasks of interpretation imposed on some of the Old Testament worthies,—on Daniel for example, at the court of Nebuchadnezzar. The king had had a dream which greatly troubled him; he not only did not know what it meant, but he had forgotten the dream itself; and he called all his wise men and soothsayers and demanded that they should first tell him the dream, and then give him the interpretation thereof. Quite like an Eastern satrap; like forcing a man to make bricks without either straw or clay.

I do not suppose that any of us will ever be required to do

THE INTERPRETER

any such thing as this. But interpretation of many more rational types we shall all be called to practise, and I wish to consider with you this function. It is a great function, as I have said, and we are all called to its exercise. If any of us are in the habit of talking gibberish, we may well indeed, as Paul suggests, pray for the power to turn it into sense; but it is not only the talkers of gibberish who have need to covet this great gift of interpretation, but those of us also who suppose that our words have some meaning.

To interpret is to explain, expound, elucidate; to take a matter which is more or less obscure and make it intelligible. In his book, "The Problem of Christianity," Professor Royce gives us an extended and profound discussion of this function of interpretation. He claims and seems to prove that the clear recognition of it throws much light on some of the fundamental psychological problems. I am not going into those profundities, but those who have read the book will be aware that I have read it, even if I have not understood it all.

For one thing, he suggests to us that the beginning of interpretation is in our own minds. The first thing that every man needs is to be able to explain himself to himself. For, in fact, there are a number of selves with which you are always dealing, and you want them to keep in some kind of intelligible relation with one another. There is your past self, and here is your present self, and yonder is your future self; and you want to understand clearly how

THE INTERPRETER

that past self came to be this present self, and what will have to come to pass if that future self is to be realized. A coherent personality involves a good deal of careful self-interpretation. The man that you are now can learn much wisdom by understanding well the man that you used to be, and the man that you mean to be will have to reckon with the man that you are now. The great Socratic maxim, "Know thyself," requires, of course, a constant process of self-interpretation.

But this is not exactly the business that I want you now to consider. What I am thinking of is rather the commerce of mind with mind, or of one mind with many minds,—the exchanges of thought and feeling by which the good of one life is conveyed to another.

I am not sure that there is not something here which is, after all, quite analogous to the work of Paul's interpreters. Are there not some among our acquaintances who need to be interpreted to themselves; whose ideas about life are more or less vague; who hardly know what it is that they want; who are full of impulses and visions and dreams and longings, but know not how to realize them? May there not be some one whom you yourself can recall, to whom you feel indebted for a service of this nature; of whom you may truly say: "He helped me to understand myself; he showed me what my life meant, and put me in the way of finding it."

But the larger work of the interpreter involves, more distinctly, a threefold cooperation. There is the interpre-

THE INTERPRETER

ter, and the person or thing to be interpreted, and the mind or minds to whom the interpretation is addressed. These constitute what Professor Royce calls the Community of Interpretation. "If, then," he says, "I am worthy to be an interpreter at all, we three, you, my neighbor, whose mind I would fain interpret,—you, my kindly listener, to whom I am to address my interpretation,—we three constitute a community. Let us give to this sort of community a technical name. Let us call it a Community of Interpretation."

In various ways we note the articulations of this bond by which human beings are united. There comes to your door a stranger who knows only the Russian language and desires to speak with you, who know only English. You confront each other and you are dumb and helpless. There is a great gulf betwixt you. But some one within the house who knows both languages is summoned; and at once the stranger's sentences are made intelligible to you and yours to him. The baffled, puzzled look passes from the countenances of both of you; you are smiling at each other, and nodding your heads in assent and appreciation. The Community of Interpretation has been established between you, and the interpreter is full sharer of the kindly interest of which he is the medium.

Longfellow sits down in his study with the *Divina Commedia* before him, printed in a language which I do not read. Dante has spoken in world-compelling tones, but to me they convey no meaning. But the scholar

THE INTERPRETER

lovingly turns that Italian epic into English verse and passes it on to me. The heart of it is mine; I rejoice and give thanks; a great soul has become my comrade.

These are striking and salient instances of the work of the interpreter. But they are only instances of a process that is as common as walking and breathing. For interpretation is the staple of social life. Like Molière's Frenchman, who had heard much talk from the literary people about the beauties of prose and wondered what this interesting thing might be, and suddenly waked up to the delightful realization that he himself had been talking prose all his life, — so we are all daily engaged in this great work of interpretation. Some of us practise it very bunglingly; few of us have any adequate sense of the fineness of the art of interpretation when it is brought to its perfection; but most of us are practising it, more or less successfully, all our lives long.

The mother is the first and the greatest of interpreters. It is hers to explain the world to the baby; to teach him the nature of things and the value of symbols and the meaning of words; to unfold to him, little by little, the facts and forces of his environment. As soon as his mind is awake, and his curiosity is aroused, and language equips him for questioning, the business of interpreting begins to be brisk. It is no sinecure. How much there is that needs interpretation! How eager and persistent is his quest into the what and the why of things! Was there ever a parent so broadly and thoroughly educated that he did not wish, before his

THE INTERPRETER

first-born was four years old, that he knew a multitude of things of which he was wholly ignorant? How delicate and difficult, yet how quickening and inspiring is this task of interpreting the world and life and truth and duty and God to the mind of the child! What a tremendous responsibility it is to present the realities of things in their right proportion to the expanding and inquiring intellect!

O you fathers and mothers, you kindergartners and teachers, in day-schools and Sunday-school,—how many of you, I wonder, have ever comprehended the greatness of the task committed to you, of interpreting the meaning of life to those before whom you stand? Take the four great words, which Dr. Cabot gives us as representing the things that men live by (I believe that he borrowed them from Tolstoy)—Work, Play, Love, Worship,—it is yours to unfold, to the minds which turn to you for light, the meaning of these great words.

To interpret work,—to make these boys and girls see the reason of it, the purpose of it, the value of it, the dignity and nobility and divineness of it,—the degradation of a life of idleness, the shame of a life which spends its energies in exploiting others for its own profit or pleasure,—what a service that is to the Commonwealth and to humanity!

To interpret play— to understand how deep is the impulse which leads to all joyful and beautiful forms of self-expression; how sweet and precious are the gains that

THE INTERPRETER

are registered in the life in its moments of relaxation; and what infinite danger there is of perverting this impulse — of suffering it to usurp a dominion over the thought and the will that does not belong to it, of permitting play which ought to be the minister of health and happiness, to be “procress to the lords of hell”; — how much need there is of such mediation as this between the young minds that surround you and the present world whose lures solicit them and whose slippery paths invite their feet!

To interpret love, — the love that gives life its meaning; the love that kindles in the heart a purifying flame; the love that makes sacred and divine the elemental impulses; that transfigures the flesh; that takes the sting from pain; that doubles our joys and divides our sorrows; that brings into the life of earth all the elements of heaven, — if we can only make these young men and women see something of its sacredness, its glory, what a world this might be!

To interpret worship,—to open young eyes to the wonder and the greatness of the things unseen and eternal, the things of the spirit, the nearness and the reality of the influences that always surround us, that press upon our thought and kindle our emotions, — that wait upon the threshold of consciousness with suggestions and promptings; that offer us a Friendship by which the better self may be enriched and ennobled, — if we can but convince those who give us their confidence that all this is standing close

THE INTERPRETER

about them, waiting to find entrance to their lives; that inspiration is a fact as simple and homely as fireside talk and neighborly fellowship; that it is always easier to find God than it is to find your nearest friend; if we can only so interpret to them the nearness of this spiritual realm in the midst of which we are always living, and the infinite resources which are always within the reach of our wishes,—then, indeed, the gateways of wisdom and the paths of peace will be open to them.

Other words of great significance hold meanings which for multitudes await the touch of the interpreter's wand. Citizenship — how great a word it is, yet to how many is its meaning but dimly seen! The throngs that pour into our population from other lands, where citizenship is hardly more than the shadow of a name, and who speedily pass through the formalities by which they are clothed with political responsibility and endowed with the functions of rulership — how quick and urgent is the call for the interpretation to them of the nature of the estate into which they have been initiated. It is pathetic, it is ominous, it is tragical to watch the hasty incorporation into the national life of such multitudes to whom the meaning of citizenship is so imperfectly known. To the vast majority of them, indeed, language is a barrier; they cannot read the laws which they have sworn to obey and enforce. Good men and women are many of these — thrifty, frugal, faithful; but how ill-prepared for the great tasks which have been imposed upon them, and how much in need that

THE INTERPRETER

the great obligations of citizenship should be interpreted to them. And how little do we, the intelligent holders of the franchise, comprehend this need of theirs and our responsibility for supplying it! How little are we doing to make these new citizens acquainted with their privileges and duties! We have brought them over here, by millions, to dig our mines, to build our railroads, to tend our furnaces, but we have given ourselves little concern for the preparation of them to be our partners in the government of the Commonwealth. Something, indeed, we have done. The children are in school, and through them many lessons of loyalty are learned by the parents. And it is possible, as the teachers of some of our cities are learning, to use the machinery of the schools most effectively in supplying this want directly to the adults themselves. The Bureau of Education and the Bureau of Naturalization are cooperating most wisely in the preparation of intending citizens for citizenship, and that work could be greatly extended.

I am far from assuming that the immigrants who speak other tongues are the only ones who need to have the meaning of citizenship interpreted to them. Multitudes who speak only English and whose feet have never pressed the soil of any other continent than this, have very confused ideas respecting the meaning of democracy and the nature of the Commonwealth which shelters them. To many of them it is little more than a legal enclosure, within which are impounded masses of striving and scrambling human

THE INTERPRETER

beings, each of whom is seeking to get for himself as much as he can,— and to yield to the rest no more than he must.

The object of the Commonwealth, as such men think of it, is to provide certain rules of the game of competition, and set men free to play the game. Of course the strong and the cunning win and the weaker are worsted in the game. Of course all sorts of groupings and combinations are formed; and some stand together to protect themselves against others, or to exploit others; and there are various social devices of prudence or of compassion, by which we try to restrain the most rapacious and to aid the less fortunate; but so long as this primal conception of society as *a chartered struggle of interests* so largely prevails, we must be living in an atmosphere of distrust, and antipathy, and strife, and suffering.

The one thing needful is that we should be freed from this primal conception of society as *a chartered struggle of interests*, and get possession of the true idea of society as *a cooperation of harmonious and common interests*, — as a Commonwealth, in which the welfare of each is promoted by the good will of all.

We have been steadily moving in this direction in this country during the last decade or two; the idea of cooperation is getting a foothold in many minds, and our laws are shaping themselves more and more to secure this result; but there is still much darkness in men's minds respecting this fundamental truth. We are still, most of us, at the

THE INTERPRETER

back of our minds, clinging to that old notion of strife as the regulative principle of society. But this is just half the truth about democracy, and a half truth is always a whole falsehood. "Democracy," says Mr. Ferguson, "regarded as a balloting contrivance for equating the hoof and claw of warring private interests, is an ingenious futility. Let it pass now to its place in the museums of antiquities along with the devices for the solution of impossible mechanical problems, like that of perpetual motion."

The deepest need of the people of the United States is to see and know that democracy means brotherhood, nothing less, nothing other. Where is the interpreter — nay, the call is not for one, but for many; their name must be Legion — where are the interpreters who will stand in the forum, and the mart, and the nursery, and the school-room, and the lecture room, and the pulpit and teach and testify and explain the fundamental truth of the Social Order, that America means democracy, and that democracy means brotherhood. The interpretation to the people of the real nature of the Commonwealth which they are trying to build upon these shores, that is the one thing that good men ought to pray for.

It must be clear to all of us that this Community of Interpretation, of which Professor Royce tells us, includes or ought to include us all; that a very large part of the business of all our lives ought to be the business of interpretation. How much we can do, if this is an intelligent

THE INTERPRETER

purpose, to help people to understand one another! How much of the misery and loss and waste and failure of life is caused by misunderstandings! How many do we know who are suspecting each other and hating each other and thwarting each other because they do not understand each other! If some one loving both could interpret each to each, how soon their feud would be at an end!

How much of the ill-will and suspicion of opposing classes is due to misunderstanding! If Catholics could be fully explained to Protestants and Protestants to Catholics, how much of the rancor and bitterness that now divide them would pass away!

Even between employers and employed there is often great need of interpretation; the motives and purposes of each are greatly misconceived by the other.

I am aware that there are often differences of purpose, antagonisms of will, which remain after all misunderstandings are removed, and which need some other adjustment than that which the interpreter can bring; but I am speaking now of those which do arise from misconceptions and which disappear as soon as each understands the other; and these are the causes of a very large part of the trouble of life. How beautiful and blessed in all this realm is the reconciling work of the interpreter!

But not only do people need to be explained to each other; all of us are in constant need of having truth and life and duty interpreted to us. We can all help one another; I talk with no one who does not give me light;

THE INTERPRETER

some rays of illumination always shine from the conversation of the unlearned and the questionings of little children. We are not always so grateful as we ought to be to those who thus bring light into our lives, and we often accept the good and use it, and wholly forget the giver; but there are few of us who do not sometimes gratefully record such help,—instances in which some tangled web was unravelled, some constructive idea was cleared, some vital truth was driven home. Such experiences are memorable:

“ For what delights can equal those
Which stir the spirit’s inner deeps,
When one who loves, but knows not, reaps
A truth from one who loves and knows! ”

And it may be that we can also recall some occasions when the joy of the interpreter has been ours; when it has been our privilege to share with those who are dear to us some truth which we knew gave them succor and hope. Which of these experiences is the richer, I cannot tell. The maxim that it is more blessed to give than to receive applies only to material things; when we rise into the realms of the spirit there is no difference; it is just as blessed to receive love as it is to give it.

Let us be glad today for all the work that has been done for us by all the interpreters; by those who watched us in our cradles, by those who have led us in high paths of thought, by those who have walked with us in the dusty ways of our pilgrimage.

And let us be grateful, too, for this high calling of the

THE INTERPRETER

interpreter to which every one of us is called, and let us pray for the knowledge and the wisdom and the courage and the gentleness by which we may be fitted to discharge its great responsibilities and to render its grateful and inspiring services!

II
WORLDS IN THE MAKING

II

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work. — John 5 : 17.

Jesus had been performing a notable work of healing, and the pious people were cavilling because it was done on the Sabbath day. He answers, as he is apt to do, by referring to the Father. His Father's rule of life is his rule. "My Father is always at work," he says, "and so am I."

The notion of his critics evidently was that the divine activity ceased at intervals; that the Creator allowed himself periods of absolute repose. That was the purport of the Creation story, and Jesus appears to substitute a larger meaning. "My Father worketh hitherto — even until now," he says. "Up to date he has been continuously at work; if his children follow his example they cannot go astray." He might, for that matter, have added "He is always resting, too; for with the unwearied energies of perfect love, labor is rest."

The truth which Jesus seeks to bring home to the carpers is simply this, that God is never too weary to minister to human needs; that his compassion and his care take no vacations; that "he who watcheth over Israel slumbers not nor sleeps"; and that those who have his spirit will

THE INTERPRETER

find no day too sacred to do a kind deed, and nothing so good that it cannot be made better.

The great truth of *the unwearied energy of the divine life* could hardly have been grasped, in all its fulness, by the people to whom Jesus was speaking. To us it should be much more easily intelligible. That God has always been at work is a proposition which we can more readily entertain. If all natural forces are the manifestation of his power it is impossible to conceive that he ever stops working.

If gravitation should suspend operation for a night; if the stars and the planets should pause in their courses; if the sun should withdraw its supplies of light and heat; if chemical reactions should be interrupted, what would become of us? Such a catastrophe could hardly have suggested itself to the people who were trying to quarrel with Jesus, but it cannot be absent from our minds.

Even we, however, may sometimes fail to grasp all the implications of this truth of the continuous and unwearied activity of the Creator in the Creation. The immanence of God has, indeed, become a more or less familiar conception to many of us, but it is a truth too large to be readily assimilated. That the Lord and Giver of life has been at work in this world and in all the worlds, through all the aeons, even until now, and now as intimately and creatively as ever, is a truth which is not probably quite familiar to all of us.

The common conception is that God's work, in nature, say, is divided into two separate functions — that of creation

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

and that of preservation. The work of creation was all done at once, and it was done a long time ago. Just how long has been a matter of dispute; the margins of the old Bible used to put the date of the creation at 4004 B.C.; that was Usher's chronology, and we still hear preaching which insists that this chronology is infallibly inspired, and that all who question it are infidels. According to this theory this world and the entire universe were created in six days. Some have contended that the day is an age, an epoch of time, longer or shorter; but whatever the length of the period, it is supposed that the last of the six periods was concluded a good while ago; that the work of the Creator was finished then, and that since that time nothing has been added to the creation.

This explanation was entirely adequate in the childhood of the world, but it does not accord with our present knowledge. We must try to find a statement which will better represent the facts of observation and experience. The belief that the infinite Wisdom and the infinite Love have been finding expression, in all the ages, and are now finding expression continually in new forms of life and being, has, at least, a high degree of probability. It agrees with the facts which we know.

If we are looking for Scriptural authority the statement of Jesus in the text expressly authorizes such a belief. Other texts convey the same meaning. "He that sitteth on the throne saith 'Behold, I make — I am making — all things new.' " It is mentioned as if it were his occupa-

THE INTERPRETER

tion: God's work is continual re-creation. Texts are inadequate testimony, however; for our assurance concerning these deepest things we must go down to our elemental conception about God. We must make our statements agree as well as we can with the larger revelations which God has been giving us through the centuries.

If the Creator is infinite both in power and in love, it is difficult for us to conceive of Him as ceasing from creative activity. We are ready to assent when we hear the prophet crying: "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary." If that prophet had known all we know about the heavens, the work of God's hands, the moon and the stars which he has ordained, he would have found some far greater reason for wonder at the unwearied energy of the Creator's work. It is when our thoughts go out into those inconceivable spaces which science has mapped for us, and when the telescope and the spectroscope and the camera unfold for us their mighty secrets, that we get some glimpses of the truth which is so far beyond our comprehension. From everlasting to everlasting this work of peopling space with suns and systems, with planets and satellites has been going forward; and sprinkled through all those stellar spaces are thousands of nebulae — little blurs of star dust, — which seem to be condensing now into suns and planets.

The process is quite too deliberate for our science to witness and chronicle and record its stages; it may take

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

several millions of years for these mists to harden into masses, and there has been no sufficient time since men began to take their observations for any appreciable changes to be observed; but there is every reason to believe that the work is forever going on; and that even now there are thousands of suns more brilliant than ours, and tens of thousands of worlds more vast than our own, in process of creation.

Worlds in the making, — the telescope shows them to us, far, far away, in the purlieus of space, at distances so great that our imagination fails when we try to conceive them. There is room enough in infinite space for infinite power to fill with the works of his hands; and about such work as this he who fainteth not, neither is weary, seems to be occupied through the eternal years.

And it is not at all certain that any one of these millions of worlds is finished yet, or ever will be. In every one of them the Creator is forever making all things new. That, at any rate, is the probability, if we may judge by what is taking place here. How many myriads of years our world has been in the making, nobody knows. Take your pad and pencil and sit down on some plateau which overlooks the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and figure out the length of time it has taken that river to do the carving which is spread before your eyes. When that sum is done proceed to reckon up the years that it took before that carving was begun, for those rocks to gather into strata at the bottom of primeval oceans and build themselves up to the level

THE INTERPRETER

where you sit. Through all these myriads of ages, the Power not ourselves, whose reason gives the law to all these processes, has been building these mountain walls and channeling these canyons, and tracing these river courses and spreading out these valleys and these prairies, and clothing the hillsides with these forests, and peopling earth and ocean with manifold tribes of living creatures.

How long this world has been in the making no man knows. Lord Kelvin conceded that it might be a million years. Infinite wisdom and infinite power have been at work upon it from that dateless dawn when the morning stars began to sing together because a new planet had swum into their ken. Mighty and multitudinous are the forces which have been working together through all this period to fit this earth for a human habitation. Is the work finished? Oh, no, far from it. How much is yet to be done! How far the creation is from perfection! Doubtless, God looks on it every day, and says that it is good; but good can be made better, and this is his eternal task, and he was never more busy upon it than he is today.

The secular forces of Nature which are only the outgoings of his power and love are certainly as active today as ever they were. Our Father worketh hitherto,—he has been working even until now, to make a better world of this, for a home for his children. Those who conceive that he finished this work of Creation six thousand years ago have a childish notion of the relation of God to his world.

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

This great new term of Bergson's — "Creative Evolution" — may help us get a little nearer to the heart of the matter. That evolution is in its essence creative, and that creation is in its essence evolutionary, is the unifying truth which resolves the contradiction over which men were stumbling fifty years ago.

Science, finding in the laws of matter and motion certain uniformities, has sometimes been swift to conclude with the ancient pessimist that the thing which has been is the thing that shall be and that there is and can be nothing new under the sun. "It is of this false inference," says Professor Tufts, "that Bergson's doctrine offers a corrective. Life, human or cosmic, may be conveniently measured for many purposes in terms of atoms, of electrons of energy, but these measurements, so necessary for estimating the future, for observing its continuity, are yet not adequate to tell the full story. Especially are they not adequate to measure mind itself, which uses them to measure the world. Life, as we experience it, in the immediate on-go of the feeling and thought is not chopped up into pieces; it is a whole. Nor is it a repetition of past units. Every moment is a new. Evolution is through and through creative. Variation is a fact as important as continuity, and variation means a something new."

Of course, God is in his world. He has always been here. And he is always at work here. Therefore it ought to be a different world, and a better world than it was a thousand years ago, or a hundred years ago, — a better world today

THE INTERPRETER

than it was yesterday. It ought to be and it is. But it is not finished yet — how far from it! Even on the physical side there is much to do. Vast areas are wild and barren; there are deserts to fertilize and jungles to subdue, and swamps to drain, and products now wasted to utilize; there is endless work yet to be done before the creation can be completed, and our Father is always at work.

What is true of the physical world is not less true of the human world. Humanity, not less really than the planet on which it dwells, is still in the making. It is not any more true of man than of the universe, that he was made and finished and set upon the earth a completed product six thousand years ago. That, too, is a childish notion. That man, in his essential manhood, was struck off, like a coin from a die, is a conception quite impossible to those who are familiar with the processes of life as they are always unfolding before our eyes.

The making of man is not such a simple mechanical process as the old creation legends picture it. Swinburne's lyric with that title is disfigured by Swinburne's pessimism; but its imaginative value is not to be denied: —

“ Before the beginning of years
There came to the making of man
Time with a gift of tears;
Grief with a glass that ran;
Pleasure with pain for leaven,
Summer with flowers that fell,

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

Remembrance fallen from heaven
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite,
Love that endures for a breath,
Night the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

“ And the high gods took in hand
Fire and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea,
And dust of the laboring earth,
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life, before and after,
And death, beneath and above,
For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span,
With travail and heavy sorrow
The holy spirit of man.”

These antitheses are largely the fruit of a mental habit, and of a somber temperament, but they do give us a glimpse of the way in which the elements have been mingled in the making of man. And without any resort to imagination, we know from the records of archaeology and of history that the human being as he exists upon the earth today, is the product of creative forces which have been acting upon him for hundreds of thousands of years.

Did you see the series of ten models made by a Belgian sculptor, which were on exhibition in the San Diego exposition, tracing the descent from the Java man of a million

THE INTERPRETER

years ago to the man of the European forests of twenty thousand years ago? "These models," we are told, "are constituted from the actual skeletal remains, and the decorations and implements are exact reproductions of those found with the bones." Thus science uncovers for us the age-long process by which God has been making man.

When the human race arrived upon this planet it was in a very crude condition. But for ages upon ages the infinite love had been preparing the earth for the coming of man, and man found himself enveloped by influences that tended to awaken and nurture his true humanity. "The present" says Mr. Shumaker, "is a stage in a process and a part of a universal ongoing." And this is just as true of every year of the past millenniums as it is true of this year. "So that man is held" (and has always been held) "within an onmoving process, as a drop of water is held within the onmoving river. Whether the general scientific statement of evolution shall undergo limitations or not, there can be no sort of question that we and all things are involved in a process of development. The present century is not a mere mechanical repetition of the past. Something gets done. Something new is begun, something old passes away. There is an ongoing. . . . There is a world-process, unfolding and unfolding with the passing centuries. From fire-mist to earth-crust, to Athens, to London, is an altogether wonderful progression. And all humankind forms part of the process and is swept onward with it. . . . To be a part of a universal process, to embody

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

that process and utter its progression in ourselves, is to involve an infinitude of touches and commerces which only a universal mind could compass."

And this is what creation means so far as man is concerned. This is the way in which the universal mind has been making man. "Our Father worketh hitherto." This is a glimpse of his great working. He is filling the infinite spaces with new worlds in which his love is to find manifestation. He is getting this world ready, through endless ages, for the home of man. "The new-born babe," says Mr. Shumaker, "is born into a home and a universe already prepared for it. From the first it opens its lungs to an atmosphere already awaiting it, and its eyes upon a world of waiting light. From the first its ears are greeted by the love notes of parents, while the voices of children and men and all the sounds of environing nature seek to awake its slumbering faculty. The upholding earth is there as another mother-bosom of support. The far-off anticipating sun has hastened with the speed of light to warm the welcoming earth, and already, with hands softer and gentler than mother's, holds the babe in its strong embrace. . . . The child is born, indeed, into a universe already prepared. The home is there to harbor it; humanity to help it; language to teach it; tradition to lead it; law to govern it; the school to educate it; the church to consecrate and nurture it; play and work there to develop it; truth to enlighten it; ideals to exalt and idealize it; art and beauty to symmetrize and refine it; the Son of God there

THE INTERPRETER

to save and shepherd it, and the divine spirit to hallow, spiritualize and fulfil it. . . . The child is born into a prepared universe. If a man stepped down from a star he would not find the earth more ready for his footstep than the babe finds all things made ready for his coming. Our infinite total environment is in readiness against the day of our birth.”¹

Such work as this it is that our Father is always doing. When he said, “Let us make man,” this was what he meant. By such ministrations of infinite wisdom, and infinite forethought, and infinite care, he would make ready man’s dwelling-place and lead him into the life that is life indeed.

Great work is all this, assuredly. What a marvellous universe it is! The greatness of his power, the might of his majesty, the wonders of his love, who can comprehend? What conceptions are these, upon which we have been looking, into which science conducts us, of the eternal God! Compared with this universe which astronomy spreads above us, and geology uncovers beneath our feet, the heavens and the earth of which our fathers had knowledge were but a toy universe. Are there no reasons for reverence and silence and humility when we stand in the presence of realities like these?

But the great, sublime, arresting thought to which our study has led us, is that all this work of our Father is un-

¹“God and Man,” by E. Ellsworth Shumaker. The readers of this volume will find many quotations from this book, to whose interpretation of nature and of life the author is deeply indebted.

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

finished work. "My Father worketh even until now," said Jesus. If he had always been at work and was still at work, that was proof that his work was unfinished. Is it not true that God's work must always be unfinished? Is not that true of all highest and finest kinds of work?

The housekeeper's work, we say, rather humorously, is always unfinished. She always hopes that it is unfinished; she wishes that it might never be finished. Work, the heart of which is love — does any one want to see it finished? "Give it the glory of going on."

The artist's work — does he wish to finish it? He doesn't like to think of that. He would be glad if the power of giving birth to beauty would never fail. It is true, I say, of all the highest kinds of work. So when we consider the kind of work about which we know that the infinite love has always been busy, we rejoice to know that it is not finished and never will be.

One admonitory hint comes to us with this reflection. Some of us have learned, in other fields, the folly and impertinence of criticizing unfinished work. And yet we sometimes venture to question the work that God is doing. It would be well if we would learn to apply our maxim to these greater affairs.

Another consideration is worth mentioning. If the world and man have long been and are still in the making, then it is clear that man's thought about the world and about God and man must have been much more imperfect a

THE INTERPRETER

thousand years ago or two thousand years ago than it is today. The world itself has changed, must have changed, for the better, if God has been working upon it for the past thousand years; and if "the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the suns," man's interpretation of this present world ought to be truer now than his interpretation of it could have been a millennium ago. It cannot, then, be rational to insist that all our thoughts about God and the world and man must be expressed in forms of words which were current a thousand years ago. Theology which does not keep up with the Creation is surely a back number.

My Father is always at work, said Jesus, *and I work*. The meaning seems to be, "I am working with him. I am helping him. I am doing the same kind of work." Paul said the same thing: "We are co-workers with God." What does this mean? asks Professor Tufts. "It was the merit of (William) James to sound one note clearly: *The universe is not complete, but is in the making.*" You and I are sometimes called on for decisions which may contribute to turn the scale for good or evil. Decision is not an empty form; it is real and serious. In such cases truth is made, and not merely discovered. It may be then that the triumph of right is not a matter of yes or no, but, as in all past history, a relative process. "Who knows," asks William James, "whether the faithfulness of individuals, here below, . . . may not aid God in turn to be more effectively faithful to his own greater tasks?"

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

The world, the physical world, the human world, is not finished; it is in the making. And God is not making it alone; he has taken us into partnership. He has made its progress depend on us as well as on himself. He has put it beyond his own power to make a man without that man's own cooperation. That is one thing that omnipotence cannot do. Equally certain is it that the making of the world waits and must wait for the cooperation of those who inhabit the world. He who fainteth not, neither is weary, has put within our reach the resources by which we may help him to make a better world of this; power stored in soils and forests and mines and streams and sunbeams; currents of subtle and nimble force waiting in the air to drive our machines and run upon our errands; and he is forever calling to the children of men and saying: Here is a world to be made fruitful and beautiful; come and let us work together; it would be worth nothing to you if all this work were done for you; but, working together with me, you can make it fit for the dwelling-place of the children of God, and at the same time and in the same process make yourselves fit to live in such a world.

And we are learning, slowly, to work with him; it is a vastly better world to live in than it was a thousand years ago; human art and skill and industry and love have wrought wonders; men like Edison and Tesla and Burbank are great helpers; the humblest housewife who trains her roses over the garden gate does her part. As the generations pass, our Father who is always at work and

THE INTERPRETER

we his children, working with him, may make this a habitation worthy of a perfected race. It will never be finished, but it will be vastly improved.

And the world of men — humanity — how far that is from being finished. The humanization of the brute — that is the work upon which the infinite Goodness has been employed for all these centuries. And the work has gone far. Since the days of the cave-dwellers, since the days of the cannibals, since the days of the Semitic and Druidic human sacrifices, since the days when patriarchs swindled their brothers out of their birthrights, and when the most erudite Greeks and Romans saw nothing reprehensible in infanticide, there has been a mighty change for the better in mankind. Our Father who is always at work in the transformation of crude humanity has not been laboring in vain. Sometimes, as now, in a war which degrades and disfigures humanity, we see ghastly reverisons to the ape and tiger type, but he who fainteth not, neither is weary, will not fail nor be discouraged until he has delivered humanity from its bondage to the brute inheritance into the liberty of the glory of the sons of God.

Humanity is still in the making and by the very terms of the covenant which the Eternal Love has imposed on himself, the progress of the work must wait upon the will of man. It cannot be carried forward without our aid. Working together with God, we may bring in the Kingdom. Without us it cannot be brought in. “The Melioristic Universe,” says Mr. James, “is conceived after a social

WORLDS IN THE MAKING

analogy as a pluralism of independent powers. It will succeed just in proportion as more of these work for its success. If none work it will fail. If each does his best it will not fail."

This is the meaning of life for us men, here in God's world. He is doing all that infinite love can do to fill the world with righteousness and peace. The one thing that infinite Love cannot do is to take away from men the chance to be men. That he would do if he solved their problems or bore their burdens for them. This world will be Paradise as soon as men want Paradise enough to pay the price of it in labor and patience. God is always doing his part, but he will never do ours; the fullness of the triumph waits upon our human wills. Our hope is in the infinite patience of him who has held us steadily to our task through so many ages of doubt and folly and sin, and has brought us now to the height from which we can see something of the way by which we have come, and catch some glimpses of the glory yet to be revealed.

Worlds in the making! Races in the making! Nations, states, communities in the making! Men in the making! Our Father who has been working hitherto is as busy as ever today upon this work. Some of us know how far it is from being finished. But it is a great joy and a great honor and a great inspiration that we may have some knowledge of what he is doing and some part with him in his work.

III

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

III

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.— Heb. 11 : 8.

This is one of the first of the westward migrations. The star of Empire is on its march. With his father, Terah, Abram had started, some months earlier, from Ur of the Chaldees for the land of Canaan; but Terah had halted with his caravan in Haran, and had found his grave there; and now the orders had come to his son to resume the march. Abram was seventy-five years young, just in his prime; and the fact that the new inheritance was a thousand miles away did not daunt him.

“ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all the substance that they had gathered, and all the souls that they had gotten in Haran, and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan, and into the land of Canaan they came.”

Just why this migration was ordered we are not informed. The commentators indulge in many speculations about it; how close to the facts their conjectures come I cannot always be sure. It has been commonly suggested that the region whence Abram started was infested with polythe-

THE INTERPRETER

ism; but it is not clear that he would improve his situation in that respect by taking up his abode among the Semitic tribes of Canaan. Indeed, the advocates of Biblical inerrancy always justify the extermination of the Canaanites on the ground that they had become so morally degraded and so horribly irreligious that it was necessary to wipe them out of existence. It does not seem probable, then, that Abram could have been sent down there to keep him out of bad company. Indeed, I incline to believe that the strongest temptation to which he was ever subjected — the temptation to slay his son — was the consequence of his living in this land where human sacrifices were common. From that temptation he was mercifully delivered; and it would seem that his example was influential in restraining his descendants from that awful superstition. So far as the record goes the Hebrews never afterward fell into that heathenism except in the case of Jephthah, in the dark ages of their history.

We may assume, I think, that He “who shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will,” had some good reason for guiding Abram to this land of Canaan. What that reason was Abram himself did not know. He did not even know whither he was going. The impulse came to move on, and he moved on. It was a divine impulse, so he believed, and he responded to it. This was characteristic of the man. “Abraham believed God,” Paul says, “and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

Just what Abram’s faith was we may not certainly

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

know. He is often credited with being the first monotheist, but I am not sure of that. He might have been and probably was a *henotheist* — a believer in, and a worshipper and servant of, *one God*; but not a denier of the existence of other gods.

Polytheists, like the ancient Chaldeans and the Greeks, who have gods many and lords many, to all of whom they endeavor to be loyal, are apt to have trouble; for their gods are always in politics, and it is often extremely difficult for the humans to know how to manage their conflicting loyalties.

The henotheist escapes some of these embarrassments by choosing out of the pantheon one god, and maintaining his loyalty to him. He does not deny that other peoples may have their gods, but he adheres to his own god and of course he believes that his god is the greatest of the gods, and able to protect him against all other powers, celestial or infernal.

The monotheist, properly speaking, is one who believes that there is only one God, one supreme deity, the Creator and ruler of all the nations and all the worlds. The later Hebrew prophets advanced to this higher stage of monotheistic belief; but the earlier Hebrews, beyond a question, were henotheists; they were worshippers of one God; Jehovah, or Yahveh, was their God, and they meant to be loyal to him; but now and then, when the crops were poor and times were hard, they ran away after other gods — Baal and Asherah and Moloch and the star of the God

THE INTERPRETER

Rephan; and had to be punished for their disloyalty. At the same time they recognized the right of every other nation to have a god of its own, only maintaining in their best moments that Jehovah, their God, was the great God, and that in the fullness of the times all the other deities would be subservient to him.

This henotheistic faith is by no means obsolete; up to date it has been the prevailing faith of the human race. Most of the European nations at the present time — in fact all warring nations at all times, are not monotheists, but henotheists. Each nation at war has a god of its own, and is relying on its god to assist it in killing the people of the other nations and dethroning their god. Not many of them state it in this way, but this is the actual fact. This is the precise meaning of war; it cannot, by any stretch of logical reasoning, be adjusted to a monotheistic faith. Whenever nations go to war, or begin to get ready for war, if they have ever been monotheists, they drop at once from a monotheistic to a henotheistic faith; and they find their inspiration in the first half of the Old Testament.

This henotheistic religion has developed many virtues; great loyalties have been nurtured at its altars; men like Abraham and Moses and Samuel and David have been trained under it; but a better day came to the Hebrews, when men like Isaiah and Hosea and the writer of the Book of Jonah, and the great nameless prophets of the Exile thought that they had found a better faith — a faith in

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

one God, the universal Father, the Father of all nations and tribes and peoples; and it was this truth that Jesus came to incarnate and reveal. How dimly this truth has been discerned even by those who have named his name, nineteen centuries of history make plain.

Sometimes it has seemed as though the nations were beginning to grasp the truth of the universal Fatherhood, but they are wont to lapse into their ethnic ways and rebuild the barriers that keep the peoples apart. Just now we are witnessing the most desperate attempt that has ever been made to nullify and make void the fundamental fact of our humanity and the central truth of Christianity; our hope has been that this attempt must fail, because of its very enormity; and that in the reaction it would destroy itself, so that the world might go forward to the larger faith for which the whole creation has been waiting and toward which it has been moving now these many centuries. For while the henotheistic religions might have served humanity very well when the nations were small and scattered and had no common interests, in these days, when they are so large and so close together and so vitally interdependent in all their interests, this attempt of each to be a law unto itself, and to have its own god and its own exclusive interests and loyalties, is not only suicidal, it is criminal. There is no crime in the whole catalogue of malefactions more deadly, more damnable, than that of the human ruler who plants himself on the proposition that his state is exempt from all obligation to other states

THE INTERPRETER

and that it is his highest duty to increase its power — at their expense.

That is what henotheism means and must mean in these days, and instead of being a religion it is the quintessence of irreligion. In Abram's day it may well have been the faith of a good man. Abraham undoubtedly believed that Jehovah was the God of his people. There is a narrative in Genesis of a very solemn sacrificial covenant in which Jehovah pledged himself to Abraham that he should be a father of many nations—"And I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give to thee and to thy seed after thee the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be thy God." No such promise as that so far as the Old Testament tells us was made to the people of Egypt or of Syria or of Chaldea. Jehovah was Abraham's God. He had no conception of any universal Fatherhood. He was loyal to his own God.

This was, I suppose, substantially the faith of Abraham; only with Abraham it was not as it was in after years with many of his descendants a wavering and inconstant faith; it was a steadfast and unfaltering faith. "Abraham believed God." There was no questioning about it; as the Psalmist said, "his heart was fixed."

We must judge Abraham by the standards of his own times; if we judge him by the ethical standards of the twentieth century we shall find him in many ways defective. He could lie, on occasion, and not blush or stammer;

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

but that was quite the custom of the country; all these old patriarchs had confused notions about truthfulness. Professor Briggs once told me that a careful study of the ancient Hebrew literature had convinced him that in the earlier periods there was no sense of the sin of falsehood; in their ethical development they had not reached the plane on which unveracity is immoral. The fact that Abraham sometimes told lies is not, therefore, necessarily to be reckoned as a fault with him, any more than the fact that he held slaves or was the husband of more than one wife. For all such deviations from modern standards of ethics we must make the necessary allowances. Abraham was not a saint according to our standards, and what Dr. Leonard Bacon said about him a good many years ago is perfectly true; if he were living in Connecticut or Ohio today we should send him to the penitentiary; and yet that does not alter the fact that he was a great, loyal, magnanimous, high-souled man; fit to be the founder of a great nation; worthy of our loving admiration. How generously he deals with all the natives of that land; how high-minded is his treatment of his rather vagarious nephew Lot; how noble is his plea to Jehovah for mercy for the fated cities of the plain, when their destruction is decreed. "Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked?" he remonstrates with Jehovah. Some clear sense of the real nature of justice — some strong conviction of the wrong that is done when the innocent are made to suffer for the sins of the guilty, is getting possession of this just mind. "Shall

THE INTERPRETER

not the Judge of all the Earth do right?" he demands of the majesty of Heaven. And the majesty of Heaven does not disallow the plea; he admits that this good man has a right to make it.

Nobody else in that old time, so far as I can discover, ever had any such faith in God as that — ever reached so high an ideal of the divine justice. It is wonderful that any one in those old days ever should have risen to this ethical elevation. Justice in those times ordinarily meant the determination of a ruler, human or divine, to have his own way; to deal with his subjects in masses; to enforce his will arbitrarily, and permit no questioning of his decrees. But Abraham clearly perceived that even between man and God there were relations of reciprocity, and that man has a right to say of God, —

“ Nothing can be good in him
That evil is in me.”

It was a great discovery, a great insight, for a man living in that dark day. And it helps me to understand why it was that Abraham was the friend of God and why, when he was called, he went out, not knowing whither he went. He believed in God. He was sure that the Judge of all the Earth would do right; he knew, therefore, that the place to which God was sending him was the right place to go.

This was Abraham's great adventure; God had come to him, in some way that we know not,— perhaps by a strong impression made upon his mind,— and had said to him,

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

“Get thee out of thy land and from thy kindred and come into the land which I shall show thee”; and Abraham had arisen and gone forth, to find his home in a distant country, a country all unknown to him.

But why, some of you want to know, should we call this a great adventure? There have always been risks in the great migrations, but there have always been men who were ready to take them; and they have not always had what Abraham had, the clear command of their God to set forth, and the positive assurance that God was going with them. “Almost any of us,” you say, “would be ready to take such a risk with such a guarantee, and such an escort. In fact there doesn’t seem to be much risk about it. If God should tell me to pack up and start for Yucatan — and that he was going with me — if I absolutely knew that God was telling me that,— I guess I’d go; and I wouldn’t stand on the order of my going. What man would be such a fool as obstinately to refuse to obey what he knew to be an explicit command of Almighty God? The great adventure that I *would not* risk would be the adventure of turning down the explicit and indubitable orders of Almighty God.”

Well, I admit that there is something in what you say. I do not believe, either, that any man who was made sure that Almighty God had definitely told him to do a certain thing would be likely to refuse to do it. And I do not think that any man would be entitled to much credit for promptly obeying, in such a case. As Browning says, such a relation between the Omnipotent and his human creature would

THE INTERPRETER

practically annihilate human freedom; if there were no room for doubt about the divine command there could be no question about obedience and no chance for virtue:—

“Thenceforth neither good nor evil does man, doing what he must.”

Which makes me wonder whether the communications between God and men in such cases could have been quite so explicit and unmistakable as these Old Testament narratives make them seem to be. Haven’t we here some oriental mysticisms, in which spiritual facts are set forth in concrete terms? When we read that God appeared to Abraham, and that God called to Adam, and that God spake to Jacob, is it necessary to suppose that there was a visible figure or an audible voice? Or was it a mental impression that came to each of them? Haven’t we an objective representation of a subjective fact? I am not suggesting the doubt, I am strongly affirming the probability that there were real communications in those days, as there are in these, between the Father of spirits and the spirits of his children; I am only wondering whether the communications in those days were not really about the same as in these, only the ways of describing them are different.

I am sure that God knows how to convey suggestions to us, and that he is constantly doing so. He speaks to you and me very often; I am afraid that we are less attentive than we ought to be to what he says. He speaks in the thoughts which he suggests, in the purposes which he

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

prompts, in the wishes that he kindles, in the impulses which he sets in motion. If God is a spirit and we are spirits and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit is not a meaningless phrase, then God must be often working in us thus,— moving thus upon our minds,— to will and to work of his good pleasure.

But there is nothing in these communications as we receive them which marks them off from the operations of our own minds; the divine influence flows into our lives noiselessly, and mingles itself with our thinking and wishing and willing, to purify, to enlighten, to uplift our lives. It does not thrust itself upon us; it does not domineer over us; it leaves us free to heed or to spurn its suggestions. We can resist the Holy Ghost, and we do, probably, every day. The good wish springs within us, and we hear the sneer with which this present world will greet it if we give it voice, and we smother it in our souls. How much better men and women we would have been if we had obeyed all the good impulses that the spirit of all truth has awakened in our hearts.

Now I cannot doubt that God was speaking to Abraham all the while *just as he speaks to us*. Perhaps the big difference between us and Abraham is that he listened a good deal more than we do; he *got in the habit of listening*. There was so much less talk of other kinds going on, in those days, that a man out on the plains, under the stars, had a chance to listen. And these silent conversations between the spirit of Abraham and the Father of his spirit were so frequent

THE INTERPRETER

and so intimate that he came to rely upon them, and to respond perhaps more promptly than some of us are wont to do to these suggestions.

And yet there may not have been, and I cannot believe that there were, any positive dictations to him of the will of God. I cannot believe it because I prefer to believe that Abraham was led, just as you and I are led, by his reason and his love, into the ways of obedience. What happened to him, perhaps, was this: It was borne in upon him — that is the way we sometimes phrase it — that he ought to leave his home and go down to Canaan. There were reasons, no doubt, reasons not put down in the story. His father had started for Canaan a good many years before and had halted by the way. Now Abraham felt that he must go. It was a good thing to do, a great thing to do, — one of the kind of things which that great unseen Friend was always putting him up to do. Compared with the other things that he might do, this, as he saw it, was clearly the finest and the largest. That was what made him sure that God was telling him to do it. *That is God's way* of telling men to do things; it always has been, it always will be. Yet it does not involve such a literal and positive expression of the divine will that there can be no question about it. What God wants of man in every age is faith in him, not mere submission to his dictation. And Browning says truly:

“ You must mix some uncertainty,
With faith, if you would have faith be.”

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

“Abraham *believed* God.” If there hadn’t been room for doubt there couldn’t have been belief. Abraham might have questioned this impression made upon his mind, — the impression that he ought to go. He might have said, “How do I know, after all, that this is the right thing to do? Who knows that I shall be better off down there in Canaan than I am here, in Haran? This isn’t a bad place to live. I shall have to make many sacrifices if I leave here; maybe I shall be more prosperous there, but I want to be shown.”

For something like this there was room in the old patriarch’s mind, as there is in the mind of every man who is called to larger and nobler life. Every such vocation involves a risk; it is letting go of certainties, it is launching forth upon uncharted seas. Whenever something higher, finer, better, calls a man, there are always queries, scruples, prudences, expediences, selfishnesses that hold him back. And the great adventure is the choice in the face of these dissuasives, of what, in his inner self, he believes to be the higher good. It may come to men in high station, bearing the destinies of nations in their hands; it may come to men in humble places, responsible for themselves or their households; the choice confronts us all, and the great adventure invites every one of us. What is it the poet says?

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to decide,
In the strife ’twixt truth and falsehood, for the good or evil
side.”

THE INTERPRETER

Once? Once a day perhaps; often once an hour. Life is a succession of critical choices; every day we may be making decisions whose consequences will reach farther than we know.

To another Abraham, no less faithful, there came, in our own day, a choice no less momentous. To him came the call to lead his people into the promised land of freedom. He told his cabinet that he had promised God that he would do it. Evidently he felt sure that in doing that he was doing God's will. But it was a great adventure; it must have been. There were obstacles in the way; there were doubts, there were reasons for doubt; but this, after all, seemed to him the greatest, the worthiest, the noblest thing to do; if so it must be God's way; and by the might of his own overcoming faith he led the people into it. He thought that God had told him to do it, and he believed God.

But it is not the patriarchs and the presidents alone who are called to make the great adventure; before the feet of most of us the better way, the larger life is forever opening. The call may be heard by the humblest souls in the unlikeliest places.

In the absolute darkness of a coal-mine, down in West Virginia, forty years ago, a negro boy thirteen years old overheard two men talking about a great school in Virginia where one could pay for his schooling by his labor, and learn at the same time some trade or industry. The words struck fire in the boy's brain. "I resolved at once," he

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

says, "to go to that school, though I had no idea where it was or how many miles away, or how I was going to reach it. I remember only that I was on fire constantly with one ambition, and that thought was to go to Hampton. This thought was with me day and night."

It was two years before he was able to start on this journey; then he set forth with all his wardrobe in a small hand-satchel, with very little money in his purse, on a journey of five hundred miles, most of it on foot, to his Promised Land. "He went forth, not knowing whither he went." He only felt sure that something higher, stronger, better than himself was calling him. Before he had been at Hampton long he began to discern the meaning of the call. "I got my first taste" he said, "of what it meant to live a life of unselfishness, my first knowledge of the fact that the happiest individuals are those who do the most to make others useful and happy."

That was Booker Washington's calling and election of God. The word that came to him in the West Virginia coal mine was as truly a divine revelation as that which came to Abram in Haran, or to Saul on the Damascus road, and he could have said, as truly as Paul said to Agrippa: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." And what a quest it was, on which he set forth. Sir Galahad's search for the Grail was no more knightly, no more holy. To win hope and opportunity, life and light, manhood and womanhood for ten millions of his fellow men, — this was his great adventure; how bravely he threw his life into it,

THE INTERPRETER

and how gloriously he succeeded in his mission! Few lives have been lived upon this planet that come nearer to the measure of the stature of a man, than that of Booker Washington.

What your great adventure may be I cannot tell. It may start from a humble place; Jesus hailed from Nazareth; could any good thing come out of Nazareth? It may lead you along lonely ways; but whoever and wherever you are, I know that there is before you a goal worth striving for, a prize worth winning. You are a child of God, and therefore there is for you — for every one of you — a high calling. That old poem of Longfellow's that the critics have so often ridiculed, — the youth passing through the Alpine village, bearing the banner with the strange device "Excelsior," and hearing as he toiled onward the call always repeated, "Higher! Higher!" is nothing to laugh at; it is the voice that every man hears who has ears to hear. What Benham says, in "The Research Magnificent," is what every sincere and veracious soul must say:—

"I know there is a better life than this muddle about me; a better life possible now. I know it. A better individual life and a better public life. If I had no other assurance, if I were blind to the glorious intimations of art, to the perpetually widening promise of science, to the mysterious beckonings of beauty in form and color and the inaccessible mockery of the stars, I should still know this from the insurgent spirit within me ; this idea of a life breaking

THE GREAT ADVENTURE

away from the common life to something better is the consuming idea in my mind."

There are minutes when you all know it. Don't forget it! Don't doubt it! Follow the gleam!

IV
GOD IN THE GARDEN

IV

GOD IN THE GARDEN

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. — Gen. 3:8.

Many of us can recall the day when these first chapters of Genesis were universally accepted in a historical narrative of the origin of the human race. There was difficulty, indeed, in adjusting all the features of the narrative, for some portions of it appear to be clearly symbolical rather than historical, and the commentators were puzzled to tell where the symbolical leaves off and the historical begins. It may be prudent to let Dr. Marcus Dods, one of the staid Presbyterian expositors, indicate some of the perplexities:

"When we read that the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field that the Lord God had made, and that he tempted the woman, we at once perceive that it is not with the outer husk of the story we are to concern ourselves but with the kernel. The narrative throughout speaks of nothing but the serpent; not a word is said of the devil; not the slightest hint is given that the machinations of a fallen angel are signified. . . . No one, I suppose, believes that the whole tribe of serpents crawl as a punish-

THE INTERPRETER

ment of an offense committed by one of their number, or that the iniquity and sorrow of the world are due to an actual serpent. Plainly this is a pictorial representation intended to convey some general impressions and ideas. Vitally important truths underlie the narrative and are bodied forth by it; but the way to reach these truths is not to adhere too rigidly to the literal meaning, but to catch the general impression which it seems fitted to make.

"No doubt this opens the door to a great variety of interpretation. No two men will attach to it precisely the same meaning. One says the serpent is a symbol for Satan, but Adam and Eve are historical persons. Another says the tree of knowledge of good and evil is a figure, but the driving out from the garden is real. Another maintains that the whole is a picture, putting in a visible, intelligible (and of course symbolic) shape certain vitally important truths regarding the history of our race. So that every man is left very much to his own judgment to read the narrative candidly and in such light from other sources as he has, and let it make its own impression upon him."

That is the kind of use we shall make of it this morning. We do not suppose that we have in the third chapter of Genesis a historical narrative; we suppose that we are reading a parable in which certain moral and spiritual truths are set forth.

We are not, however, proposing this morning to try to elucidate the doctrine of the fall of man, so far as that may be here symbolized; we confine ourselves to one trait of

GOD IN THE GARDEN

the narrative — the walking of the Lord God in the Garden.

We have here the suggestion of a relation between man and his Maker, between the human child and his divine Father, which is significant and instructive. It is clear that to the writer of this narrative such a visit as he here describes, of the Creator to his creature, was nothing out of the ordinary. The writer has some definite notions of the greatness and the power of Him who had formed the earth out of nothing, and had stocked it with the kingdom of life and had hung the firmament above it; but between that great Being and the inhabitants of this earth the relations were close and personal — friendly, not to say neighborly. We do not find him speculating much about the form of God or the metaphysical contents of his nature; he seems to assume that God is kindred to man; that man is capable of knowing God, of entering into familiar friendship with him. That was true of the writers of all the narratives that are gathered up for us in these first books of the Bible; they had no doubt that God could easily make himself visible and audible to men; that he could communicate with them immediately and unmistakably; that they might meet him, and recognize him any day, upon the highway; that he might come to their door and ask for entertainment and tarry with them for the night — as he did with Abraham and with Lot. The fact that the Lord God had come walking in the garden in the cool of the day should not, then, have caused any surprise or confusion to Adam.

THE INTERPRETER

Such a call could not have been unexpected by him, and the writer does not mean so to represent it. Visitors from the heavenly world might happen in at any time.

Adam and Eve were, indeed, confused on this occasion, but it was not because such visitations were unusual; it was because of some misconduct of their own. A psychological crisis had occurred in their experience which caused them to be ill at ease. Into that I am not going on this occasion. It is rather upon what this writer suggests as the normal relations between God and man that I wish to dwell.

You may say that this is a childish representation of these relations. It is, indeed. That is why it interests me. That is why I think it may have some real value for us. For there was surely some meaning in what Jesus said about the closeness of the little children to the deepest facts of life. And Wordsworth's testimony, that heaven lies about us in our infancy, is not altogether incredible. Upon the fresh perceptions and sensations of a little child some impressions are doubtless made that the dulled faculties of later years fail to note. And so it may be that the child-ages sometimes got a nearer and truer view of the deep things of life than the more sophisticated centuries get. And I wonder if there is not something in these earlier conceptions of the relation between ourselves and the Power not ourselves which we might recover,—something without which there must always be in our lives a sense of want and incompleteness.

GOD IN THE GARDEN

Something of this sense of lack in our appreciation of the significance of the world about us is expressed by Wordsworth in that famous sonnet:—

“ The world is too much with us; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
 Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon.
The sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
 The winds that will be howling at all hours,
 And are upgathered now, like sleeping flowers, —
For this, for everything, we are out of tune.
It moves us not. Great God, I'd rather be
 A Pagan, suckled on a creed outworn,
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.”

What is this feeling of forlornness which Wordsworth expresses? For whom is he speaking? Not mainly for himself, I think. It is rather a vicarious confession. He is trying to give voice to the consciousness of the multitude with whom he mingles daily. He feels that the men who are completely immersed in the business of the world, and who are dealing only with the materialistic and scientific and commercial aspects of nature must find themselves in a lonesome place. When you have reduced the Universe to mechanism, no matter how cunningly contrived, you have made for yourself a desert. Carlyle, in “Sartor Resartus,” describes the desolation of that experience as he recalls it:—

“ Now when I look back, it was a strange isolation I then

THE INTERPRETER

lived in. The men and women round about me, even speaking with me, were but figures; I had practically forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In midst of crowded streets and assemblages I walked solitary; and (except that it was my own heart, not another's, that I kept devouring), savage also, as the tiger in his jungle. Some comfort it would have been could I, like a Faust, have fancied myself tempted and tormented of the Devil; for a Hell, I imagine, without life, though only diabolic life, were more frightful; but in our age of downpulling and disbelief the very devil has been pulled down; you cannot so much as believe in a devil. To me the Universe was all void of life, of purpose, of volition, even of hostility; it was one huge, dead, immeasurable steam-engine, rolling on in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb."

Such is a highly emotional account of the condition in which a man is left when the mechanical theory of the universe gets full possession of him. Forlorn he is, beyond a doubt; there is nothing left in the world about him that answers to the deepest longings of his own spirit; there is no love there; there is no life there. Perhaps he does not know what ails him; he is restless and discontented, and he rushes hither and thither after all sorts of excitements and sensations that will drown his sense of forlornness. The frantic pursuit of pleasure, in this generation, is the fruit of this sense of loneliness. If, like Wordsworth, he is familiar with the old nature worship, and knows how

GOD IN THE GARDEN

the Greeks peopled nature with beings from another world, and so found themselves constantly in the presence of messengers who might bring them tidings from other realms, he might naturally cry out after that simpler and more primitive faith which made nature not a dead mechanism but a living organism.

It will not be possible, however, for us to restore those ancient conceptions. We shall never see Proteus rising from the sea nor hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn. The old nature worship will never feed our faith, nor shall we ever be able to teach ourselves to expect with Abraham and Lot, in any literal sense, to welcome the Lord of all the earth as a guest at our tables or a sojourner under our roof, or to hear his voice, as Adam heard it, as he walks in our gardens in the cool of the day. That kind of communication is not for us.

And yet may we not also hope for and share the essential good which these patriarchs enjoyed? Were their relations any more close and real with the Lord God of grace and truth than ours may be? Was the Infinite Father more friendly to them than he is to us? I cannot believe any such thing. I am sure that the friendship with the source of all Truth and Love, which they interpreted by these homely and domestic symbols, is not withdrawn from you and me. We know that we shall not see God in the form of a man walking along the highway or entering our front gate; but there is today a blessing for the pure in heart, because they may see him; and, I

THE INTERPRETER

trust, no less clearly than those men of the olden times saw him.

It is not through the senses that he will be revealed to us. Eye hath not seen and will never see,—ear hath not heard and will never hear,—the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; the revelation is made by the Spirit and in the spirit — to the inner self — to the intuitions, the feelings, the spiritual nature. But it may be just as convincing, just as satisfying as if the eye had seen it or the ear had heard it. Indeed, the things of which I am most sure are things which none of my senses ever told me. My moral insights, my discernment of spiritual values, my faith in the goodness of God and in the integrity and the truth and the purity and the fidelity of those I love best, my assurance that righteousness and justice and goodwill will be victorious over all forms of selfishness and greed and malice — all these things are the real things, the sure things of my experience, and I am indebted to my senses for none of them. It is through my commerce with a realm beyond the senses that these things have been made realities to me. And in that realm beyond the senses, the realm of the ideal, the realm of the spirit, God appears to men just as truly now as he ever did.

I am inclined to believe, therefore, that this picture of God walking in the garden in the cool of the day may assist our faith, if we use it as a symbol. It is not said, you observe, that Adam and Eve saw him. They “heard the voice of the Lord God” walking in the garden — *the*

GOD IN THE GARDEN

sound — the margin has it. It may have been the breeze and they thought it was his breath. It matters not. Somehow he found his way directly to their consciousness. Something was said to them which they were sure came from him, which they understood, and to which in their thoughts, they had to make reply.

It was a likely place, I am sure, for them to meet with God. They might well have expected to find him there. Even if there had been nothing miraculous about it,— no impressions on their senses, nothing but the impression made upon their thought — it would have been a fitting place to commune with him.

“ Some of the [Hebrew] conceptions of Deity in early ages,” says Sir Oliver Lodge, “ are no doubt childish. Jehovah, for instance, is said to walk in a garden in the cool of the day, as Zeus walked in the Garden of the Hesperides, where likewise bloomed well-guarded apples. But these things are childish in the good sense; they are poetical modes of expression for a reality. Surely from a beautiful garden the Deity is not absent, or, as the Manx poet says:

“ ‘ A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot.
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot,
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not. —
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool ?
Nay, but I have a sign:
’Tis very sure God walks in mine.’ ”

THE INTERPRETER

It is not, indeed, an uncommon thing, even in these days for men to meet God in gardens, and such like places, and to hold sweet converse with him there. Matthew Arnold met him once, I am sure, in Kensington Garden, and heard his voice quite clearly:—

“ In this lone open glade I lie
Screened by deep boughs on either hand,
And at its end, to stay the eye,
Those black-crowned red-boled pine-trees stand.

Birds here make song; each bird has his,
Across the girdling city's hum;
How green under the boughs it is!
How thick the tremulous sheep-cries come!

Here at my feet what wonders pass!
What endless active life is here!
What blowing daisies, fragrant grass!
An air-stirred forest, fresh and clear!

Yet here is peace forever new;
When I, who watch them, am away,
Still all things in this glade go through
The changes of their quiet day.

Then to their happy rest they pass;
The flowers upclose, the birds are fed,
The night comes down upon the grass,
The child sleeps warmly in his bed.

Calm Soul of all things,—be it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine
Man did not make and cannot mar;

GOD IN THE GARDEN

The will to neither strive nor cry,
The power to feel with others give;
Calm, calm me more, nor let me die
Before I have begun to live ! ”

And Wordsworth in that lovely valley of the Wye, near Tintern Abbey — a valley which is all a garden — had speech with him that has lit up the meaning of life for many of us.

Let me not seem to say that it is only in the gardens and the beauty-spots of earth that men meet God; if their eyes are anointed to see him and they have ears to hear, they may discern him in the thronged city thoroughfare, in the murk of the coal mine, in the din of the iron mill, in the noisome slum — wherever humanity is fighting life's battles or bearing its burdens. James Oppenheim finds him — wonderful and inspiring tokens of his presence — in the Bowery at night — not the quarter in which the saints are disposed to go in quest of him. All these manifestations of his presence I believe in, and I desire nothing more than that anointing of the vision by which I may perceive his presence in sordid and sunken places and his beauty in coarse and crippled lives. But for those of us whose spiritual perceptions are less keen there is profit in remembering that in the “lovesome” and peaceful places he is apt to be found — sure to be found, if with all our hearts we truly seek him. I am sure that he likes to be in such places, with the trees and the herbage and the flowers and the cool green grasses; and in the quiet hours we

THE INTERPRETER

may find him there and hear his voice, if we have ears to hear.

There is one trait of this old picture which seems to me significant. To Adam and Eve it appeared that the Lord God was walking in the garden, in the cool of the day—"taking his pleasure," Professor Mitchell says; it was his garden as well as theirs, and, according to the homely and childish conception of the writer of the story, he was making himself at home there. If Adam and Eve had been obedient and faithful to their trust, nothing would have pleased them better. And I do not think that we shall be stretching the meaning of this parable if we say that this is the kind of relation which the Father of our spirits wishes to maintain with all his children. He never intrudes. Every man's personality is sacred. Every man's house is his castle. Every man's garden is his privacy. But he would like to have it so that he could come in at any quiet hour and have a talk with us about the work and the children and the farm and the school and the shop and the office. If we could find a way to give him the freedom of the garden—and the house, for that matter—at any rate of some of the quiet places where we have a little chance to be by ourselves, it might be a wholesome thing. He never breaks through any of our enclosures; he never enters our consciousness without being bidden: "Behold," is his word, "I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and will open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me."

GOD IN THE GARDEN

The two unhappy denizens of the first Garden were afraid, when they heard the Lord God walking in it, and they hid themselves among the trees. The *naiveté* of the story is delightful. Children they must have been to imagine that they could hide from the All-seeing One. It is possible that to some of us the presence in the precincts of our lives of Him from whom nothing is concealed might seem to be unwelcome. It may be that we have reasons for not wishing for familiar intercourse with him. None of us, of course, imagines that he can hide from him, but if it is true that he only knocks and waits to be bidden, then we can make sure that he will not come in. And perhaps some of us are rather glad that we can keep him out. Does any one really think that that would be a rational thing to do?

Granted that it is possible to have friendly intercourse between our spirits and the Spirit of all truth and goodness; granted also that it is possible for us, by the action of our own wills, to bar that influence out of our lives, would it be, for any man, a rational thing to do? Very likely there may be some things that you would rather not talk about with him. But those things, as you very well know, are not hidden from him. Is there anything better for you to do than to make a clean breast of these matters to him? Is there anything else for a sensible man to do? Can you afford to take any other judgment on yourself than the judgment of perfect truth and perfect justice? And can you ever hope to find any one who will be more considerate,

THE INTERPRETER

more merciful, or more friendly to one who has gone wrong than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? No, my friend, whatever your faults or failures may have been, I would not, if I were you, think of hiding from the face of my greatest Friend; and I would not bar him out of my solitude; I would leave the garden gate wide open, and expect him. He will not fail to come if you expect him, and if you are perfectly honest with him, it cannot fail to be well with you.

Many of you, in the weeks now before you, in your own gardens, or in the meadow paths, or in the forest silences, or by the river side, or on the mountain tops, will be where the Lord God is walking. I hope that you will sometimes hear his voice. It will not always, I trust, be a voice of reproof or condemnation; I hope that it will often be a voice of counsel, of encouragement, of comfort, of inspiration; I hope that it will light up the dark places in your own life, and strengthen your hold on the things unseen and eternal; that it will bring you closer in sympathy and trust to Him who not only walks in the gardens in the cool of the day, but along the ploughman's furrow in the morning, and among the noisy factories at noon, and through the dark and fetid alleys by night — the Friend and Comrade of all who labor, of all who suffer, of all who stumble or wander from the way. I wish that you may meet him more than once or twice in the cool and restful places where you may be abiding or sojourning; and that you may have frequent and frank speech with him about the things that

GOD IN THE GARDEN

most concern you. From such communings we should return, I am sure, when the summer heats are past, with a new sense of the meaning of life, with new hope and courage for the tasks upon our hands, and in that quest of good to which our lives are given,

“Strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find and not to yield.”

V
LOYALTY

V

LOYALTY

*When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith
in the earth?—Luke 18 : 8.*

This word faith sometimes means belief, the intellectual acceptance of truth; and it sometimes means fidelity, the promise-keeping virtue, the root of faithfulness. “Recognition of and allegiance to the obligations of morals and honor; adherence to the laws of right and wrong, especially in fulfilling one’s promises; faithfulness; fidelity; loyalty”; thus the dictionary man defines and discriminates. Milton makes Adam say of his wife that he ought to conceal her failing while her faith to him remains. And it is what Tennyson is singing about when he tells Lady Clara Vere de Vere that

“ Kind hearts are more than coronets
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

It is what we mean when we speak of “keeping faith” with another, or talk of “good faith” in a transaction, or a narration. In national parlance the Romans used to speak of “Punic faith,” thus turning Carthaginian treachery into a proverb; and the French have long talked of “*la perfide Albion*,” though perhaps they are not using

THE INTERPRETER

that epithet so freely just now. This meaning of the word is familiar to all of us; and there are a number of important texts in the Bible in which this meaning should be emphasized instead of the idea of belief. For instance “the faith of God” is sometimes appealed to, and that means his faithfulness, of course; and there are several cases in which the word faithfulness, in our English versions, represents the Greek word *πίστις*, usually rendered faith.

Precisely what Jesus meant by it may not be clear; but he had just been talking about the unjust judge, and the difficulty that good men experienced of getting justice done them, here; and it would seem that he must have been thinking of some possible lack of fidelity or loyalty rather than of any lack of orthodoxy, which he might discover on his return to earth. That, I am sure, was the matter upon which there was most reason for solicitude. That was true then, and it has always been true. There has never been much difficulty in finding people who were willing to believe almost any conceivable theory or dogma; but there has always been some difficulty in finding enough of those who were ready

“With hand and body and blood
To make their bosom's counsel good.”

If Jesus had returned to earth in any of the centuries since he went away, he would have found abundance of credulity — multitudes who were eager to accept any theological propositions which might be offered them. Even in these days, a crowd seems to be waiting on every

LOYALTY

street corner to swallow any vagary, no matter how preposterous, that is promulgated in the name of religion; and the tale of the sects lengthens as the years increase.

But the number of those who are known as faithful men and women, who keep their contracts, and live up to their covenants and remember their promises, and can be depended on to make good, in all their obligations to God and men, — of these the number increases much less rapidly.

I am not saying that the number does not increase; I think that you can always find such people; it has been my good fortune to meet a good many of them, often in humble stations, — men and women not always brilliant or learned or refined or renowned, but absolutely true and always dependable. A pretty large share of my comfort in life has always been due to the fidelity of such people.

I do not suppose that our Master meant to deny the existence of such people; perhaps he had just been confronting the unfaithfulness which often looms up about us, so vast, and so portentous, and so disheartening, and it wrung from him this rather querulous outcry. If Jesus was human, and I think he was, he must have had these moments of depression. The Psalmist was in the same mood when he cried out:

“ The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men,
To see if there were any that did understand,
That did seek after God.
They are all gone aside; they are together become filthy,
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

THE INTERPRETER

What good men say when they are in such moods, is not to be reckoned against them; much less is it to be used as it often is, as the basis of dogmatic propositions about human nature. There are times when most of us feel like saying what the Psalmist said in his haste—that all men are liars—and when we are inclined to think that every man is a rascal; but we should be ashamed to build a philosophy of life on these assumptions or to try to work them out in our practical relations with our fellow men. On the whole we build our lives on a philosophy of trust; we could not build on any other assumption; the most pessimistic of us is compelled to assume that human nature is, when all is said, fundamentally trustworthy; the fact that one is so disappointed and resentful when men prove false or treacherous shows that he had been expecting them to be true and loyal, and that he had a right to expect it.

I am sure, therefore, that Jesus did not mean that his despairing words should be taken literally. He knew that whenever he returned to earth, whether in the flesh or in the spirit, he would find faithful men and women here. That last prayer of his in which he so tenderly speaks of those whom the Father has given him, who are his forevermore, who have so loyally kept the truth committed to them and whom he so confidently commends to the Father's care, is evidence of his abiding expectation that there would be some faithful ones to greet him if he should return. Nor can we imagine him to have no prevision of the multitudes whose souls would be kindled by his own great

LOYALTY

loyalty, and who for his sake, and because of him, in every great test of character, would be faithful unto death. We cannot give the right value to this saying of our Master unless these things of which I have been speaking are fully taken into account.

And yet these words of Jesus are not to be dismissed as the mere whimsical reflection of a discouraged and disillusioned mood. There was reason for the discouragement; and many a brave and true disciple has felt the same heart-sinking. And I dare say that it is often borne in upon the consciousness of many of us that the deepest trouble with human nature and human society is this lack to which Jesus is pointing in the text, the lack of loyalty. Forasmuch as this virtue of loyalty comes near to being the foundation of character, and the constructive principle of the social order, the absence of it is fatal, and any deficiency of it is deplorable.

Loyalty, as Professor Royce has defined it, is “the willing and thorough-going devotion of a self to a cause, when the cause is something which unites many (or few) selves in one, and which is therefore the interest of a community. For a loyal human being the interest of the community to which he belongs is superior to every merely individual interest of his own.”

Loyalty begins, of course, in the primary groups. The first call for it is in the family; even when the family consists of only two, there is ample room for it. The family, when it is formed, is a community which enshrines

THE INTERPRETER

something more sacred than the added interests of one man and one woman; the blending of the two lives has created something that was not in either life or in both lives before. The same kind of thing has happened which Browning describes in *Abt Vogler*, when two sounds, mixed with a third, make harmony, which is something new and marvellous:—

“ And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,—
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but a star.
Consider it well; each tone of our scale in itself is naught;
It is everywhere in the world; loud, soft, and all is said;
Give it to me to use! I mix it with two in my thought;
And, there! Ye have heard and seen; consider and bow the head!”

Something quite like this happens when two lives unite to form the sacred community of the family. The two are one, but the one is much more than the sum of the two, just as water is something more than so many units of hydrogen plus so many units of oxygen.

Of this primal community the bond is loyalty; it brings such bounty when it comes, and it leaves such vacancy when it goes! As this community grows, and the lines of its relationship lengthen, laterally through marriage, and vertically, by the generations; and the bonds multiply, and the relationships become more extended; the sense of a common interest draws the family together and develops a devotion which, in its best estate, is about the best thing on earth. In nothing, I think, does our human nature give a better account of itself than in these family loyalties, in the firmness with which they hold the group together, in

LOYALTY

weal and in woe, in honor and dishonor, through evil report and through good report. It is a virtue that can be exaggerated, no doubt, but it is not likely to be; and we all think better of any man or woman, of any boy or girl who holds the family honor dear, and strengthens the bonds that bind it together.

Other groups are formed, by relationships more or less sacred, and often with far wider boundaries — groups with which we become identified, and by which this spirit of loyalty is invoked. Sometimes the bond is religion; there is a phase of religious truth which the group has accepted, and it constitutes a cause which demands the devotion of its adherents, and calls forth their loyalty.

Sometimes political ideas furnish the bond; it is a political party to which we are expected to be loyal.

Sometimes it is some cause of moral or social reform which has gathered its advocates and promoters, and summons them to be faithful to the obligations they have assumed.

And since society has passed, in Sir Henry Maine's phrase, from status to contract, most of us find ourselves, in the greater part of our lives, living in relations of one kind or another in which faithfulness is required. Business or professional obligations of some sort rest upon most of us. There are duties to discharge, engagements to keep, services to render, debts to meet, bills to pay, contracts to fulfil, tasks to perform, with respect to which others have claims upon us. The whole of industrial,

THE INTERPRETER

commercial, civil society is a network of obligations of this nature, in which every one of us depends on the faithfulness of numberless other persons. If I default in any one of my obligations, many others, some near me, others far away from me, of whom I know nothing, may suffer the consequences. If I am habitually and constitutionally unfaithful to my obligations, my conduct runs a flaw through the whole web of the social structure of which I form a part.

There is another and larger relationship to which this principle applies even more closely. The obligation of citizenship is one of the primary obligations. I am a citizen of the United States, not because of any choice of my own, nor of any privilege conferred on me by my ancestors, but simply because I was born here, and have always lived here. I owe to the United States the obligation of loyalty, not because I have promised to render it, nor because anybody has promised for me; but simply because I am a citizen. "For a loyal human being," says Professor Royce, "the interest of the community to which he belongs is superior to every merely individual interest of his own." This, of course, is true of that comprehensive community which we call the state or the nation.

Now it is true of all these groups and relationships of which I have spoken that the fundamental virtue, the constructive principle, is loyalty — faithfulness to the obligation which the group implies, and implicitly, if not explicitly, enforces. So that we may speak of loyalty as the fundamental social virtue. Its presence makes society

LOYALTY

coherent; its absence means social disintegration. If our Lord, at his coming, should not find faith on the earth, he would find all things hastening to decay. The evidence that his kingdom was coming would be the presence of faith everywhere among men, as shown in the good fidelities of social intercourse; men and women, boys and girls, standing in their places, keeping their promises, performing their tasks, meeting their obligations, expressed or implied. If there is anything deplorable and discouraging, it is the absence of this spirit from society; if there is anything promising in our social relations, it is the indication that this spirit of faithfulness is growing in the hearts of the people.

How fundamental this principle is, in our national life, is shown by a discussion in one of our thoughtful journals entitled: "*Why We Distrust Our Government.*" The writer points out that this distrust of our government is our fundamental national weakness. He says that "to command its human forces the government must have the confidence of the people"; and that "to use its human forces and its material forces effectively, the government must be capable and honest; it must be organized and managed in such manner as to make efficient action practicable. None of these results has been attained. Our government is not trusted; our government has not developed expertness in organization and management."

Then he goes on to enumerate some of the concrete facts which stare us in the face:—

THE INTERPRETER

“ We have been spending hundreds of millions every year on our army and navy — about as much as Germany has been spending — and are now so ill-equipped for defense that we have had to call out the state troops to police the Mexican border.

“ Our army posts have been scattered about in congressional districts, not because of their value for defense or the training of men, but to help congressmen get votes.

“ Our navy yards have been located at strategic points for vote getting, in many cases being so ill-adapted for the purposes of their establishment that naval officers themselves have urged their abandonment.”

Of the hundreds of millions of dollars appropriated from the public treasury for river and harbor improvements and public buildings, a very large share has been wasted — the interests of vote-getting and partisan bargaining being the main consideration — and so on and so on. The writer continues:—

“ The weakness and wastefulness in our governmental agencies, national, state, and municipal, constitute a condition that cries out for remedy — that causes the people not alone to lose confidence in those who have been chosen to conduct their common business, but to doubt our republican institutions. We realize that our common business is conducted, not in a cooperative spirit, but by agencies which distrust one another. Congress distrusts the President, the President distrusts Congress; state legislators distrust governors, and governors distrust legislators;

LOYALTY

local councils distrust local executives, and vice versa; and the people distrust everybody and everything political or governmental."

It should be added that we have a system of party politics whose primary business it seems to be to cultivate distrust. "Turn the rascals out" is the slogan of the political battle in both armies. We might almost say that party politics is the organization of distrust.

The writer from whom I am quoting goes back to show that this principle of distrust figured largely in our national life at the very beginning. I suppose it must always be so, when liberties are won by force. Revolutionaries always naturally hate and distrust the powers against which they revolt. Naturally they regard all executive power with suspicion. The instinctive impulse is to deprive governments of power; to make them as weak as possible. All the earlier maxims of our democracy reflected this judgment. "The state which is least governed is best governed." If that is true the ideal condition is anarchy — no government.

It would seem that the prevalent theology of that period — the theology of the reformation — must have lent itself freely to this political programme. For it was founded on the doctrine of total depravity, on the theory that all men by nature are as bad as they can possibly be. The natural attitude of such human beings toward each other must therefore be that of distrust, an attitude which makes stable and coherent society impossible. It must be said

THE INTERPRETER

that most men of that time were so much better than their theology, that they kept alive enough faith in one another to prevent the disintegration of society. But when they were trying to found their polities on distrust the doctrine of total depravity furnished support to the bad political philosophy.

Certainly it was a frail and rotten foundation on which to build a state. But does it not explain why we have come to distrust our government? Does it not appear, in the words of our philosopher, that the defects of our government "are a logical product of the worship of weakness, a corollary of increasing distrust of the government by the people, and of distrust of the people by our constitution-makers? Irresponsibility, inefficiency, wastefulness, log-rolling and pork-barrel methods of satisfying local constituencies, and invisible government — these are the products of an underlying fundamental error" — the error, namely, of building a state on the foundations of distrust.

It is amazing that this stultifying error should have persisted through so many centuries. Its consequences are obvious enough. They stare us in the face every day of our lives. Its only fruit is confusion and disaster; it never was anything else and never can be. Faith, trust, confidence, loyalty — these are the foundations of the stable social order; they always have been and they always will be. Distrust is the breeder of disloyalty. If you want men to be faithful you must have faith in them. Is it not an

LOYALTY

astonishing fact that after nineteen centuries of Christianity, when five hundred millions of the inhabitants of the earth are bearing Christ's name, so very few of them have got hold of this rudimentary principle of his teaching?

Does it not dawn upon you, men and women, that the hour has struck when we who bear this name have got to begin to take our religion seriously? Is not this lack of loyalty, this lack of what is central and constructive in human society something for which we have got to find a remedy? Are we going to try to muddle along for another century or two with the kind of Christianity that we have been trying to make do, with the kind of democracy which seeks in mutual distrust its bond of union?

I do not think that we shall manage it. I think that the guns which are blasting out the trenches around Verdun are digging the grave of that religion and that political philosophy.

Mr. Wells tells us, in one of his latest books, that the question at issue in the quest for peace "is the power of human reason to prevail over passion." I would not put it in just that way. I haven't so much confidence in the power of reason to prevail over passion; but it seems to me that we might look for the time when rational beings would say: "We have suffered enough; let us find some relief. We have been working this principle of distrust for a great many centuries, and it has filled our lives with destruction and the world with ruin and misery; we know that this way won't work; let us find another way."

THE INTERPRETER

We have been building on doubt, suspicion, fear; are there not safer and more enduring foundations? We have assumed that the eternal vigilance which watches against other people's treachery is the only safeguard of liberty; let us see if the enduring confidence which calls forth loyalty is not a safer reliance.

Mr. Wells says that "the darkest shadow upon the outlook of European civilization at the present time is not the war; it is the failure of any cooperative spirit between labor and the directing classes." We have got to get rid of that, and it is only a sample of the things we have got to get rid of. And the thing that we have got to get hold of is faith in men, — the faith that makes faithful.

If the Son of man should come today he would find this faith on the earth; less than we have a right to look for, but enough yet to leaven the nations. He would find men who believe with all their souls that faith is mightier than force even in the restraint of evil doers; men like Henry Ford, who take prisoners by the hand and bid them stand up and be men; men like Thomas Osborne, who go down to the bottom of a pit that is well-nigh bottomless, such as Sing Sing prison — and call darkened and hopeless men up into light and hope — and they come!

When the Son of man comes he will find many more whose hearts have been kindled by the faith that makes faithful, by the love that inspires loyalty. Idealists men call them; it is apt to be a word of contempt. There are many other contemptuous and scornful words spoken in

LOYALTY

these days concerning all who believe that weapons of good will are mightier than carnal weapons; let us try to forget that such words can be spoken; let us wait with patience for the day when all will know that the power of God is in the things which men count foolishness.

And now, out of these reflections, what practical lessons have we learned?

This, first, that since the welfare and peace of the earth depend on its loyalties, it is the first business of each one of us to be loyal, in every relation of life; to be true to the trusts reposed in him; to be able to say at the end, what Paul said, "I have kept the faith."

This, second: I want to be trusted; I am going to deserve to be trusted; if I am to be the man I ought to be I need to be trusted. This is the big debt the world owes me. Now every other man wants it, deserves it, needs it as much as I do. It is my second great business, therefore, to give to every human being the same measure of trust that I ask for myself. I must think about my neighbors as I want them to think about me. I must believe them capable of the same loyalties that I myself approve. This thing has got to be reciprocal. To demand for myself a consideration and a respect that I do not extend to my neighbor is the essence of piggishness. Because I want to be trusted I must trust.

The same is true of all groups, big or little. Employers need to be trusted by their employees, therefore they must trust them, and vice versa. Each must give the other the

THE INTERPRETER

credit of being the same kind of man that he means to be and thinks he is. That is the essence of justice. That will put an end to all the trouble.

It must be the law of nations, too. Every nation wants to be considered a pacific nation. Every nation in Europe is claiming that for herself today. What every nation demands for herself she must concede to her neighbors. No nation monopolizes all the goodness of the world. Even the United States does not. The United States wants other nations to trust her pacific purposes. Therefore she must trust their pacific purposes. Armaments are a proclamation, an advertisement of distrust. That is all they pretend to be. The way to keep war blazing and hell boiling on the earth is to keep on building them.

All that is needed to bring permanent peace to earth is that every nation shall trust all other nations just as it wishes to be trusted by them.

All that is needed to turn earth into Paradise is that every man shall think of his neighbor just as he wants his neighbor to think about him. That is the heart of the Golden Rule; that is the whole of the law and the prophets.

VI

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

VI

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.—Eccl. 11:7.

The Lord God is a sun.—Ps. 74:11.

The writer of this ancient book of Ecclesiastes must have spent most of his days in a melancholy and pessimistic mood, but he has his lapses into cheerfulness, and we find him here in one of them. Even he can sometimes admit that the world is not all a fleeting show, that earth is not wholly a desert drear. “Truly,” he cries, “the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun.” The hopeful mood with him is fleeting; in the next verse the cloud comes back: “Yea, if a man live many years let him rejoice in them all; but let him remember the days of darkness, for they shall be many.” Is it not a dubious counsel? Why should one suffer himself in the days of good fortune to be dogged by the premonition of coming ill? Of course trouble is coming, but the way to be ready for it is to take the good of the present hour. Let us listen rather to the word of the wisest teacher, who forbids us to worry about the future. “Be not anxious for the morrow!” Leave all that to God, and keep a trusting heart!

THE INTERPRETER

It is not, however, with the glooms of this pessimist that we are concerned this morning, but rather with the gleam of light which has broken into his darkness; with the admission which even he is forced to make: "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun."

Even this, we must not fail to admit, is not an absolute and unqualified truth. To behold the sun, by direct vision, is not a pleasant thing at all. When we look the sun in the face we are blinded. We need smoked glass. What this philosopher means is that it is a pleasant thing to behold the sunshine, spread over the face of the earth, lying like sifted gold dust on the green grass, reflected in the hues of the blossoms by the wayside, mingling with the soft mists that lie upon the tops of the forest on the mountain side, chasing the cloud shadows across the meadows, flashing from the ripples on the river, lighting up the smiles of happy human faces. A pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sunshine.

Yet even this is not always to our consciousness an absolute and undiluted good. There are days, even in this climate, when the sunshine is too much in evidence; when it is oppressive; when we are fain to seek the shade. The corn curls its leaves, the flowers wither in the borders, and men fall down in the street because the sunshine is more than they can bear. They tell us that in those regions where the skies are always cloudless, the perpetual glare of the sun becomes almost unendurable. "An Anglo-

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

Indian," says Dr. Griffith Jones, "retiring from the scorching plains of the East, once told me that one of the reasons why the home-climate so speedily restored his balance was because of the escape it provided from the maddening monotony of cloudless weather. Strange as it may appear to us, even sunshine may become an obsession, and faultless weather a noonday nightmare."

There is a hymn of Dr. Doddridge which we used to sing, which tells us that we shall have, in heaven,

"No midnight shade, no clouded sun,
But sacred, high, eternal noon."

Let us hope that it will not be quite so bad as that; that there will be cool shadows, and soft twilights, and even grateful darkness in which we may sometimes bathe our weary eyelids. I like Samuel Longfellow's way of putting it much better:—

"O God, our Light, to thee we bow,
Within all shadows standest thou;
Give deeper calm than night can bring;
Give sweeter songs than lips can sing."

Thus we remind ourselves of the truth that no human values are absolute; that nothing is so perfect but that it becomes evil in disproportion. Light is good; it is the medium of vision, but too much light blinds us; it is only when it is mixed with shade that we can see.

Yet our pessimist's concession is grandly true: "Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sunshine." How great a good it is only those fully know

THE INTERPRETER

who have once enjoyed it, and from whom its blessed ministries have now been withdrawn. It is the one inclusive good of our physical experience. There are a few days in the year in which, in our climate, we find the sunshine overpowering; but the rule is that we rejoice in it. When we waken in the morning and see its golden flood pouring in at the window our hearts are glad, the day is well begun. We walk abroad in it, and our hopes are uplifted by its message of good cheer. How much the sunshine has to do with human happiness! The people in Southern California, where there is so much sunshine, seem to me to bear upon their faces the witness to its joy-bringing influence; they appear to be happier than the people in more somber climate; they ought to be.

But the sunshine gives us something better than a cheerful temperament. Rather, I should say, it brings us that which is the source of cheerful temperaments; it brings us health and life. Listen again to the Essayist who has started me on this study: "Every sunny day means an incalculable store of physical energy gathered up for the dark days of winter, to be let loose in myriad forms of labor, mechanical, intellectual and even spiritual, in other places by and by. The effect of clear light shining on the human frame is mysteriously tonic and rejuvenescent. Hygienists have invented the sun-bath for many forms of skin and even internal maladies. Wise people, however, do not wait for times of sickness to enjoy as many sun-baths as they can. For the sun's direct rays not only

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

quicken the normal vital forces in a marked manner, but are the sworn enemies of those subtle forms of bacillie life which are now known to be the active generators of disease. When we have learned to use our sunny hours as we ought, we shall have become once more a sturdy race of creatures. At present, what with our gloomy dwellings, our absurd costumes, covering up all but a few square inches of our skin-surface, and our sedentary habits, we are little better than cave-dwellers. Off with these stifling garments and out into the sunshine, good folk, if you would be well, if you would be physically happy and strong!"

That counsel of this kind is good for many of us can hardly be doubted. We have before us now the promise of two or three months of sunshine; for the autumn days in this climate are the days when this good gift of God is bestowed most ungrudgingly. Let us rejoice in it, and gather and store the strength we shall need in the sullen days of midwinter.

But the sunshine brings us not only joy and health, it is the source of all the mightiest energies by which our globe is made habitable. How much power there is in this—which as yet is almost wholly unutilized—no man can begin to calculate. We know, of course, that the energies locked in the coal beds, and the oil and gas measures are only the accumulations of sunshine, gathered up and condensed, and stored away for the use of man. It is the wealth that the sun was pouring into primeval swamps and morasses. hundreds of thousands of years before man made his ap-

THE INTERPRETER

pearance on this planet, on which the world is now depending for light and heat. It is sunshine, released from its long imprisonment under ground, that glows in our grates and beams from our lamps today.

Of course it does not need to be said that it is the sunshine which awakens to life, and sustains in life, all things that grow out of the ground, and that thus provides the sustenance of life for all creatures that live upon the earth. The relation of the light and warmth of the sun to the tribes of living creatures is one of the primary facts of sentient existence.

But what uncounted volumes of solar energy are coming to us now every year, in the direct rays of the sun. "We are told," says my essayist, once more, "that there is enough mechanical power running to waste in an hour's sunshine to drive all the steam engines and mills and motors of the world a thousand times over for a whole year. The heat falling in the tropics on a single square foot of surface has been estimated as the equivalent of one third of a horse-power. The force of Niagara itself would, on this basis, be matched by the sunshine streaming on a square mile or so. A steamship might be propelled by the heat that scorches its decks. Already solar machines are in use in Arizona and California, which do mechanical work at a remunerative rate. When this process has been mastered, we shall be independent of our coal beds, our windmills and water turbines and all other sources of energy, for we shall be able to tap the sun's power direct and at small cost.

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

What a future is this indicated for the arid Sahara, and the sun-scorched deserts of Persia, Arabia, and Australia ! ”

Is this a dream? I see no reason for so regarding it. The elements of probability are far greater than were those that ushered in the great discoveries of the telephone and the wireless telegraph and the Roentgen rays. And it appears to me that when we contemplate the sun as the direct source of a radiant energy which may be applied, in ways now unknown, to the supply of the primary human needs, we are in the presence of a possibility more momentous than anything which has yet taken form in the physical world.

I suppose we shall all admit that there is no fact which concerns us as living creatures so much as this fact of the sunshine. It is the source of our joy, of our life, and of most of the manifold energies which we use in the fulfilment of our intelligent purposes on the earth. And the thought which confronts us this morning is, that great as have been the ministries to our lives hitherto of this benignant power, there are possibilities and promises of other and more wonderful bounties, of which we have hardly yet conceived.

I suppose that the old poet must have been thinking about some of these things when he exclaimed “ The Lord God is a sun!” Little, indeed, did he know of the magnitude or the marvellousness of the forces stored in the central orb of our system; the mighty astronomical facts which to us are commonplaces were far from his thought. If he had known what we know, his words would have had a far

THE INTERPRETER

larger meaning than they ever had for him. But he knew that the sunshine brought gladness and hope into the heart of man; he knew something of its relation to the springing life of the earth, and he was thinking of these benignant effects when he cried — “The Lord God is a sun!” Surely we can use his words with a comprehension of their significance to which he could not have attained. To him the sun, whose tent was the blue canopy overhead — which came out of the crimson pavilion of the morning as a bridegroom comes forth from his chamber, and rejoices as a strong man to run his course — this great monarch of the sky, moving in majesty from one end of the heaven to the other, scattering the shadows, sowing the fields with the seeds of life, making glad the heart of man and providing him with the things needful for his life — was a symbol of that great unseen Power in whom he trusted, whose ministries to human needs filled his heart with thankfulness.

To us this great central source of joy and life and power, not only for our own world, but for all the planets of our system, if we take it as a symbol of the divine beneficence, must have a far more impressive meaning. For any man who knows the true relation of the sun to the earth, as the Psalmist did not know it, such a symbolism would have a vast significance. Yet I think that we should fail to tell the whole truth about it if we called it simply a symbol. Instead of saying “The ministry of the sun to the earth *resembles* the beneficence of God,” we must rather say,

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

The ministry of the sun to the earth *is* the divine beneficence, part and parcel of it; these gifts of joy, of life, of power, are not *like* the gifts of God to men, they *are* the gifts of God to men; it is his joy that sparkles in the sunshine; it is his life that thrills in our veins when the warm sun quickens our pulses; it is his power that is poured forth in all this radiant energy. A pleasant thing it was for the eyes of this old philosopher, in his hours of insight, to behold the sunshine, for it was a symbol of the goodness of the divine Being; to us it ought to be a sublime and a glorious thing, for it is nothing else but the outpouring of the life of God in his direct ministry to human need — a ministry so large and so bountiful that no words of ours can tell its meaning.

Our study of the sunshine has surely brought us in sight of some great truths, which we cannot now fully unfold. But there are two or three aspects of these truths to which I should like to draw your thought.

In the first place we have before us an impressive illustration of the manner in which revelation grows. The sun, to the Psalmist, was a symbol; but he had to take his own conception of the sun and let it teach him what it could of the nature of the Being whom he worshipped. If we use it as a symbol, how much more it tells us than it could have told him! We find our way, always, through Nature to God. And the greater is the Nature through which we pass on this quest, the greater must be the God whom we find behind it, or, within it. The enlarging con-

THE INTERPRETER

ceptions of the universe must enlarge and ennable our thoughts of God.

In the second place our study of the ministry of the sunshine shows us not only what it has done already for the world in which we live, but opens to us hopes of greater bounties yet to be bestowed. Need I tell you that we are confronting here a proof of the divine nature of this ministry? This is God's way of giving. Every gift makes room for a greater gift. This is the God you are praying to, trusting in, working with, beloved. He has done some great things for you, but there is always something better coming. If we fail to grasp this truth we miss the whole meaning of our relation to him. Before us, as individuals, working out the problems of character and service; before us as a church, taking up the tasks that now summon us, there are new discoveries to record of the resources of the divine helpfulness, new adaptations to make of the infinite power by which all our work must be done. What our great Counsellor and Companion has done for us is little compared with what awaits us in his beneficent purpose; for he is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

In the third place there may be a hint for us, as spiritual beings, in the suggested discoveries of new energy to be taken directly from the sun's direct rays. What if it should turn out that a tremendous source of power had been waiting there for the children of men since the morning of the Creation! That would only be the turning of

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

another leaf in the history of human development. That is what we have been doing from the beginning — appropriating, one after another, the good things prepared for us from the foundation of the world, which we might have had sooner, if we had known enough to take them. If it should turn out that the heat and power that we need for our homes and our shops are waiting for us in the direct rays of the sun which has been shining over our heads all our lives and beckoning us to take his bounty, what a disclosure that would be to us of the truth that the greatest good of life is always nearer than we know; that it is our own blindness and ignorance that keeps us from appropriating and enjoying it. That is quite as true in the spiritual as in the natural world, and it is a truth which this experience may help us to understand.

In the fourth place there is comfort and inspiration for us in this truth that the Lord God is a sun, the source of light and joy, of life and power. The Psalmist and the pessimist rejoiced together in this assurance and we all do well to rejoice. In that great bounty we are all the sharers, and we ought to gather it up and store it in our hearts with thankfulness.

But what is our relation to this central Source of light and life and power? Are we simply the recipients of his bounty? Do we take of his fullness as the grass and the flowers and the trees do, drawing his life into ourselves and letting it find its end in us? Or are we, like the planets, non-luminous bodies, reflecting the light of the central sun?

THE INTERPRETER

We may, indeed, receive his life as the flowers do, and reflect his light as the planets do; but this is not, according to the Biblical conception, the completion of our relation to him. For souls, unlike flowers and planets, are kindred to the central Sun, the Lord and Giver of life. We are made in his image. We are partakers of his nature. We are sharers in his life. We have something more to do than to reflect his light, we have to live it, to reproduce it. We are not to be non-luminous bodies, receiving and absorbing the light; we are to be luminous bodies, centers and dispensers of radiant energy. That is our high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

If the Lord God is a sun, we who are the children of God must be children of the light, which means that our natures are to radiate light and joy and life and power. That is what it means to live the Christian life in this world.

Most of us, I fear, are too well content to be merely absorbents of sunshine. We take all we can get of the good of life and grumble because we get no more, having not much concern whether others share in it, and taking little pains to dispense to others the bounty we receive. That is not the manner of the Kingdom which Jesus came to establish here; for he who said of himself "I am the Light of the world," said to his disciples also, "Ye are the light of the world." When those who bear his name shall share his nature, live his life, enter into his joy, the world will be filled with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God

THE LORD GOD IS A SUN

as it shone first, in the face of Jesus Christ, and now shines in their faces.

Centers of radiant energy we are all to become. But how? This is not a condition into which we can put ourselves by any contriving or willing of our own. No man becomes a light in the world by saying, "Go to! let me shine!" To become the possessors of such luminous power we need something more than choice and purpose, we need inspiration. The power is not ours, it comes from outside of and above ourselves. It comes from that "SOMETHING MORE" which the worldliest of us sometimes feels to be the unseen Source of all that is good in him. And it is in our reverent communing with this divine Spirit that the flame of sacred love is kindled in our hearts, by which our lives become centers of radiant energy.

Some of you have heard President King speak, more than once, of the way into the great values of life; and have felt the emphasis which he places on the need of staying in the presence of the best, in every sphere of value, till it has had a chance to get hold of you and stamp its image upon you. Stay in the presence of the best music, of the best art, and respond to its influence as best you can until you become familiar with it; read the best books patiently and receptively until there has been time for their meaning and their beauty to find their way into your thought, and make themselves at home there; above all, stay in the presence of the great personalities till the purity and sweetness and strength and charm of them have had a chance to

THE INTERPRETER

put their spell upon you. Whose is the greatest Personality we need not argue here; most of us would agree. If we could stay in his presence, alone with him, not once in a while, but often; not for "a brief glance, a passing word," but for sacred hours of reverent thought, I doubt not we should often find the same thing happening to us that happened to the two who took a long walk with him one evening, not knowing who he was, and who said to each other when they had parted with him, "Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked with us by the way?" That is the fire which lights up hope and love in human hearts. I don't care very much what your theories about Jesus Christ are, but I know that if you will stay in his presence long enough to let the mind that was in him get a chance to permeate your thought, and the love that was in him to weave its spell about your heart, others will find, if you do not, that you are becoming a center of radiant energy; that from your life into theirs are flowing light and joy and life and power.

VII
THE ELIXIR

VII

THE ELIXIR

*Passing through the valley of Weeping they make it a place of springs,
yea, the early rain covereth it with blessings.—Ps. 84 : 6.*

The people here described are those “in whose heart are the highways.” “To Zion” the translators suggest. A much more poetic interpretation is that of Dr. Alexander, that these “highways in the heart” are the open communications with the spiritual realm. These are the people in whose inner life the paths by which prayers ascend and inspirations descend are not tangled ways and by-paths, but wide and free thoroughfares, so that between themselves and the Source of all wisdom and goodness there is always direct and free intercourse.

The light and love of that superior realm with which we ought always to be in the closest relations, thus flow into their lives and fill them with the abundance of peace.

What we are now concerned with is the effect produced by such lives upon their surroundings. “Passing through the Vale of Weeping,” says the Psalmist, “they make it a Place of Springs; yea the early rain covereth it with blessings.” “The Vale of Weeping — or Baca” — apparently is a sterile and forbidding tract where the pools are salty and the banks verdureless; where external nature is desti-

THE INTERPRETER

tute of beauty and charm. Or, as suggested by the second phrase, the conditions are like those which prevail in the Orient or in California after the long rainless summer, when vegetation has disappeared and the country is a parched desert. To such a land the "early rain" is the symbol of all reviving and restoring influences. The change in the face of the earth which is caused by the rain that comes to Palestine in November, brings with it the renewal of life and hope and happiness to men. It seems like a new world, like a resurrection. The prophet in setting forth the refreshing and reinvigorating effect of the teaching of the truth, can find no finer emblem than this: "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither but watereth the earth and maketh it to bring forth and bud that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth." And the description of the reign of the Prince of Peace in the seventy-second Psalm takes up the same similitude: "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers that water the earth." Could anything better than this be said of the administration of a civic power over any people — that its effect upon their social life was like that of a refreshing rain upon parched and thirsty fields?

Such, in the figure of the Psalmist, is the nature of the influence shed abroad upon the world around them by these men and women in whose heart are the highways that keep communication open between this world of sense and

THE ELIXIR

that world of spirit that lies so close alongside it. Their very presence in the earth turns arid plains into gardens; transforms the salt pools into life-giving springs; clothes the brown and barren hillsides with fresh verdure.

Shall we say that this is a figure of speech? It is rather more than that. For when the life of the Spirit does get possession of a man and shapes all his conduct, it is almost certain that physical nature round about him will show some signs of its presence. Always when the Spirit is poured upon us from on high the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted for a forest. Nature itself rejoices when man comes into his birthright and knows himself to be one of the sons of God.

What I want to consider with you is the transforming effect upon all our surroundings of this spiritual principle. The truth is one that is set forth in a book which I have been reading, in a chapter called "The Personalizing of Life."¹ The argument of the book is that the first duty of man is to realize his own personality — to come to himself. Personality is something more than individuality. A tree or a flower or an animal may be an individual; only a being possessed of self-consciousness, unity, freedom, and moral sense can be called a person. Then there are human beings whose individuality is strongly developed, but whose personality is defective. They are quite sufficiently marked off from the mass of humanity, they possess a certain amount of egoistic initiative, they push their

¹ By James W. Buckman, D.D.

THE INTERPRETER

own interests vigorously enough in their contact with their kind, but they are far from possessing those higher spiritual qualities which make a man a true personality.

What is the "True Self"? The true self, one author answers, "is the unselfish self, the self that is greatest and yet least individualistic. It is *me*, yet not *mine*. The instant one attempts to monopolize his True Self, to make it his and his only, particular and possessed, it is gone. Only the empirical, individualistic self remains. For this True Self is universal. It is conscious of itself only as related to God and to other selves. . . . The True Self, so to speak, secretes goodness as a nautilus secretes its shell, and this secretion is Character. . . . The struggle for character is the supreme struggle of life — a struggle, not with others, but within oneself. Say what one will of the struggle for bread, the struggle for wealth, the struggle for pleasure — the struggle for character is the most widespread, the most intense, the most absorbing and the most worth while of any human interest in this or in any age.

"Slowly, but certainly, with many forgettings and recoverings, with many disloyalties and redevoctions, men and women are coming more and more clearly to catch the vision of the True Self within which is the center of all true judgments and appraisals, and to honor character which enshrines it. In our finer moments, 'our seasons of calm weather,' we 'feel the immortal youth' of the True Self

THE ELIXIR

within and know that while we are leal to that, no loss or defeat can come to us, but only immortal gain and progress."

I have given you these liberal citations from this interesting book because I want to get before you as well as I can the nature of that True Self, which is the thing that each one of us in his best moments cares for most. It is this True Self which always keeps the highways open into the higher realms. And now I want to reflect with you upon the effect which this True Self, when it becomes enthroned in any life, exerts upon all the features of that life, its habits, its surroundings, its outward form and costume, how it transforms and transfigures them.

I have named my theme "The Elixir," because the alchemists believed in a fabulous substance which, stirred into molten lead or silver, would change them to pure gold. Some such vision of a magical transforming agency still haunts the dreams of imaginative physicists. We shall look for it in vain in the laboratories, but the thing which it prefigures is no novelty. This is precisely the office of spiritualized personalities, to re-create all nature with which they come in contact, to transform and refine and beautify the whole of life.

Let me speak first of the imaginative contemplation of nature which finds in her a response to our own feelings of admiration and of awe. The poet always personalizes nature. In her aspects and moods there is something that he feels to be kindred with himself; something with which

THE INTERPRETER

he can hold communion. In the words of one of our own American singers:—

“ The bubbling brook doth laugh when I come by
Because my feet find measure with its call;
The birds know when the friend they love is nigh,
For I am known to them both great and small;
The flower that on the lonely hillside grows
Expects me then when spring its bloom has given;
And many a tree and bush my wanderings know
And e'en the clouds and silent stars of heaven;
For he who with his Maker walks aright
Shall be their lord, as Adam was before;
His ear shall catch each sound with new delight,
Each object wear the dress that then it wore;
And he, as when erect in soul he stood,
Hear from his Father's lips that all is good.”

Wordsworth is, of course, the high priest of this revelation, though all the great ones share it. Not only in “The Prelude” and “The Excursion” and “Tintern Abbey,” but everywhere in his verse is the utterance of this consciousness of something in the world about him that is kindred to his spirit; that calls forth and sustains his higher emotions; that fills him with its peace. So in “The Prelude” he tells of the experience of his boyhood:

“ Then while the days flew by and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feelings; I was only then
Contented, when, with bliss ineffable,
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye

THE ELIXIR

Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs and shouts and sings
Or beats the gladsome air: o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible,
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed."

Thus it is that the pure soul, the True Self, invests the natural world with divine significance; beholds reflected from it a light that never was on sea or land. Is this mere fancy? Is it not a deep insight,—the realization of the beatitude that the pure in heart shall see God? Is not the imagination here, as always, the organ of revelation?

But I must come down to homelier aspects of our theme. For it is not only true that the spiritual mind gives the world about us a new and nobler seeming and enables us to discern in it meanings and glories which else were hidden; it is also true that it works actual changes in things; that those who have been transformed by the renewing of their minds, themselves proceed to transform their surroundings. As men ascend from mere individualities, to become true personalities, the fact is reflected in the very order and manner of their life; it is refined and beautified; it is made orderly and sweet and winsome.

THE INTERPRETER

"Consider, for instance," says our author, "how the primal instinctive functions essential to the maintenance of life have been gradually uplifted and consecrated by the touch of personality. Eating, for example, at first so desperately animal and matter of fact, — *sans* table, *sans* dishes, *sans* plates and knives and forks, *sans* manners, *sans* everything, — how it has been personalized! From the helter-skelter, hand to mouth gobbling of the unwashed barbarian estate to snowy damask, silver service, French china, and grace before meat, is a transformation that only the persistent demand for an outer comeliness to match that inherent something we call personality could have accomplished. . . . Still more significant is the spiritualizing of the sexual relation in the sacredness of marriage, with solemn pledge and holy rite and life-long loyalty — thus making the home the very shrine and center of personal values and spiritual culture. So completely and beautifully has the true home been personalized that everything within it and about it has a spiritual aspect. Every movement of the daily round — which is thus no longer a round but a circle of symmetry — every picture on the wall, every rug on the floor, every book on the table and article in the work-basket, every toy in the nursery, every tree on the lawn and flower in the garden, is touched with the transfiguring light of personality — what is more magical than the effect of a woman's touch? — so that the whole has become a very temple of the human spirit. As such it is less a creation of hand and eye than of mind and

THE ELIXIR

soul, a fabric of beauty and harmony made according to the pattern in the Mount."

Such is the effect when the true *elixir vitae* is poured over domestic life. All that makes our homes beautiful and dear is due to this transforming influence. And the practical truth is that each one of us ought to be the center and source of the same kind of transforming influence. We ought to be the kind of people who, when we pass through the Vale of Weeping, make it a place of springs; at whose coming, like that of the early rain, the parched and dreary tracts of our common life spring into freshness and beauty.

I will not dwell on the contrast which these words suggest to every one of you. All of us know people who turn every green and pleasant land through which they pass into a desert; who change the fresh springs of good will and kindness by the wayside into salt pools of bitterness and suspicion. There are men and women with whom you cannot talk long without thinking a little worse of yourself and everybody else; who cannot live long in any neighborhood without stirring up jealousy and strife, whose whole effect upon the life about them tends to deform and disfigure and deprave. I will not dwell on this side of the picture, I say; I only sketch in this bit of background that we may see more clearly the contrasted characters on which we are trying to fix our eyes.

For we have surely known many others whose influence on the life round about them is just the reverse of this.

THE INTERPRETER

They make the world pleasanter and roomier and more habitable wherever they go; they draw together those that are estranged; they kindle the enthusiasms that fill life with hope and courage; they transform the dreariest commonplaces into enlivening thoughts. The best of these effects are not wrought of any set purpose. These people are not trying to impart such influences; they are quite oblivious of them. Those who turn the Vale of Baca into a well do not go there for the purpose of changing the climate and improving the water supply; it happens while they are "passing through" the valley; it radiates from their persons; it is unconscious influence. It is because they are what they are that such effects follow; not because they are going about to produce them.

If your life and mine were filled with this transforming power, I wonder where it would be likely to reveal itself. Where would the signs be seen of its vitalizing touch?

It ought to be visible first in the places where we spend the most time. This magic is nowhere more potent than near the hearthstone. Those in whose hearts are the highways are apt to make the home the most beautiful place on earth. Where else are the influences of a gracious personality so strongly felt, so lovingly treasured? We all understand this, and I do not need to dwell upon it. We are all acquainted with homes in which such personalities have shed abroad their sacred influence, refining, cheering, ennobling, till a fragrant presence pervades them,

THE ELIXIR

“ Like vials full of odors sweet
And harps of sweeter sound.”

But the place where this transforming touch is needed most is the work-a-day world. That seems, it must be confessed, an unpromising realm for the radiation of influences like these. In the noise and the dust, the smoke and the grime of factory or mill or mine; in the push and rush of office or counting room; in the strife of class with class, and the struggle of union with non-union, there seems to be little room for this subtle force of a spiritualized personality to make itself felt. One thinks of Mark Twain’s quaint conceit,—of the inadequacy of an ounce of attar of roses to sweeten a glue factory.

Nevertheless, the case is by no means as hopeless as it seems. The men and women in whose hearts are the highways, never pass through this sordid precinct without leaving some trace of their presence. It may not always be visible to men but the angels see it. There is many an employer who never forgets that he is a gentleman when he is talking with an employee; who never fails to recognize the manhood of the man with whom he is dealing; and the contact of a few minutes with such a man often changes the salty pool in some workingman’s heart to a fountain of the water of life. It is quite possible to fill a smoky and noisy factory with the aroma of good will; to make its air vibrant with the spirit of justice and fairness and honor which finds expression in all its administration.

But all this is a purely personal influence ; there is no

THE INTERPRETER

machinery about it; no preamble and resolutions; no constitution and by-laws; it is just the touch of life upon life; the radiation of friendship from a heart of good will. There are people who cannot jostle you in a crowd without conveying by the touch their friendliness. “A lady turning a corner in London, so the story goes, ran against a little street ragamuffin. She stopped and with genuineness and grace begged his pardon. The little chap took off his cap and said with a smile: ‘You have my parding, Miss, and you’re welcome to it. And, say, the next time you run agin’ me you can knock me clean down and I won’t say a word.’ Turning to another boy when she was gone, he added, ‘I say, Jim, it’s fine havin’ some one askin’ yer parding, ain’t it?’” Just a drop of the elixir had touched this poor boy’s heart.

Mr. Buckham tells another story which illustrates another phase of it. “At Hofod [in Wales] on December 16, 1904, Evan Robert told how the revival reached him. One evening, while at Langhor, he walked from his home down to the Post Office and on his way passed a gypsy woman who saluted him with ‘Good evening, sir.’ Her use of ‘sir’ in addressing a mere miner went straight to his heart (they use that appellative much more sparingly in the old country than we do here) and he asked himself why he had not said ‘Good evening, madam,’ to the gypsy. ‘From that moment,’ he says, ‘I felt that my heart was full of the divine love, and that I could love the whole world, irrespective of color or creed or nationality.’” Just a

THE ELIXIR

kind word from the lips of a gypsy woman, falling upon the ear of a miner. What did it do for him? It flashed upon him a great truth. It invested him with manhood. The elixir of life was in the love that prompted that word.

So that we need not wait for the poets or the prophets or the leaders of business or of society to set this force in motion. "The word is nigh thee"; no matter how humble thou mayest be. Speak it out, and let its saving grace go forth. It is open to all of us, as that noble hymn of George Herbert admonishes us, to distil this elixir from the commonplaces of our work-day life.

" All may of Thee partake,
Nothing can be so mean,
Which with this tincture (for thy sake)
Will not grow bright and clean.

" A servant, with this clause
Makes drudgery divine:
Who sweeps a room as for thy laws
Makes that and the action fine.

" This is the famous stone
That turneth all to gold;
For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told."

VIII

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

VIII

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

Cast away from you all your transgressions wherein ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves and live ye. — Ezek. 18 : 31, 32.

These are familiar words. We have been hearing them, all our lives, in the revival meetings. We have always heard them used as the call to repentance of the individual sinner, — as the proof of the need of the regeneration of the individual sinner, — as the threat of the doom of eternal death to the individual sinner. We have always understood them as a message addressed by a merciful God to the individual sinner.

Such use of them, by a principle of accommodation and analogy, is admissible. They do set forth the principles on which God deals with individual sinners. They do convey to us the message of individual salvation. The preachers and the evangelists have not misused them when they have applied them to this purpose. But it would have been well if they had always made it plain that this is not the primary application of the words. Primarily these words were addressed, not to individuals, but to a people, a nation. The words themselves are perfectly explicit

THE INTERPRETER

on this point. “ Make you a new heart and a new spirit; for why will ye die, *O house of Israel?* ” This phrase “ house of Israel,” is applied in this prophecy a great many scores of times to the Jewish nation. The commission which this prophet Ezekiel received, at the beginning of his ministry, was this: “ Son of man, go and speak my word unto the house of Israel.” It was to the people in their collective capacity that his message was to be spoken. The nation was to be called to repent; to turn from the evil of its ways; to get a new heart and a new spirit. The prophet often illustrates the national sin and the national repentance by the sin and the repentance of an individual; but it is the nation that he is dealing with primarily; it is to the national consciousness that he is making his appeal; it is the national reformation that he is preaching from the beginning of the book to the end of it. He personalizes the nation; he conceives of it as a moral personality, with moral ideals, and moral purposes and moral responsibilities, and as such he delivers to it the word of God with which he has been entrusted.

While, therefore, the evangelists have been justified in making use of his words to enforce the need of individual repentance and conversion, the need of the individual to make himself a new heart and a new spirit,— the central and primary truth of the prophecy is the need of national repentance and conversion; the need of the nation to make itself a new heart and a new spirit. If these words of Ezekiel have any significance for us, their application is

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

first of all to the life and character of the nation. They not only justify us in saying, they require us to say, that a nation may repent and be converted; that a nation may need a new heart and may get a new heart.

You say that a nation is composed of individuals, and that is true; but there is a community of thought and feeling, a consensus of judgment, which prevails in every people, and by which the ideas and choices of individuals are largely formed and guided. We call it public opinion, and we truly say that the force which normally controls a democracy is public opinion. In one sense it is true that public opinion is wholly made up of the opinions of individuals; in another sense it is equally true that the opinions of individuals are largely formed by the influence upon them of public opinion. Thus the community comes to have common thoughts and feelings and purposes; to have an intellectual and moral atmosphere, a character, a spirit which every individual breathes and by which the life of every individual is more or less affected. And this prevailing influence is sometimes good and sometimes evil; sometimes tends to life and growth and sometimes to death and destruction. Public opinion is sometimes vital and vigorous and salutary, and sometimes, the words of Isaiah, addressed to the Commonwealth of Israel, more truthfully describe it: "The whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it."

Thus there is need of such words as these that the prophet

THE INTERPRETER

Ezekiel is speaking in the text to the house of Israel, calling to repentance and renovation of life; calling not only for the casting away of transgressions and the reformation of evil practises, but for a new heart and a new spirit, a new public opinion, a new social atmosphere, a new direction of the common ideas and the common choices of men.

I suppose that such a call is always sounding forth from the seats of authority; that there is never an hour in the life of any nation when the summons to repentance and the renewal of life would not be heard, if there were ears to hear. In the life of every nation as in the life of every man, there are always old evils to put away and new inspirations to welcome. But there are times in the life of a people as in the life of a person when this call becomes articulate and commanding; when it seems clear that no mere patching and mending will do, but that a thorough renovation of the national life is called for. And such a word, it seems to me, is being spoken to our nation in this hour. And not to our nation only, but to all the nations. It is a day when some radical changes in human affairs are called for; when, in some large sense old things are to be put away and all things are to become new. To our own nation, however, this summons just now seems urgent, and it is the exigency which confronts us that I desire to consider.

Lest you may be disturbed by the fear that you are going to be treated to a discussion of current political or partisan issues, let me assure you that they are not in my mind. I am thinking of something deeper than the problems of

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

political method; it is not of the machinery of parties or of administrations that I want you to think, but of the heart of the nation, of the spirit of our national life.¹

That something is wrong with this seems to be evident to most of us. Outwardly we are in very good condition. The crops are exceptionally good, the railroads are busy, trade is fair, we hear of few commercial failures; against all the traditions and all the predictions, this turbulent presidential year has been notably a year of prosperity. But in spite of all this we are not so happy or so hopeful as we ought to be. What is the trouble? "The crisis in the political situation of America," says a thoughtful observer, "after years of agitation and growing discontent, means really that popular government has been tested and found wanting in the great business of informing society upon a large scale with the spirit of economic and social justice." If that is true, it is a serious condition. If popular government has failed in this respect; if it has not inspired the people with the spirit of economic and social justice, the failure is indeed portentous; and the sense of unrest and solicitude which does, no doubt, lie heavily on the hearts of thoughtful men and women, is not to be wondered at. What shall we say about it? Is it true?

Let us test the matter by getting the judgment of classes upon each other. The great cleavage in an industrial society like ours is between the wage-payers and the wage-earners. What do the wage-payers think about the wage-

¹ This sermon was preached, Oct. 26, 1912.

THE INTERPRETER

earners? Do they find them to be inspired with the spirit of economic and social justice? Do employers, as a class, feel confident that laborers, as a class, are disposed to be fair and equitable and reasonable in their dealings with their employers? We are constantly hearing testimony to the contrary. The general opinion of employers seems to be that workmen, as a class, are inclined to shirk and soldier; that they are constantly trying to get the advantage of their employers, to crowd them into a corner; to extort from them unreasonable compensation for their work; that they are constantly becoming more unreliable, more discontented, more troublesome. There are exceptions, of course, among them, all the employers would say; but this is the general tendency of the working class. If we take the testimony of the various employers' class journals, that is the general condition. And I am inclined to believe that there is a good deal of truth in these testimonies. I do not believe that the attitude of the working class toward their work and toward their employers is all that it ought to be. I think that the most fair-minded employers have a great deal to endure from the unfairness and dishonesty and ill nature and bad faith of the people who work for them. But if they are anywhere near right in this, then it seems to be pretty clear that our democracy has not succeeded in inspiring this largest class of our population with the spirit of economic and social justice.

And now let us ask the working men what they have

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

to say about their employers. Do they find *them* to be inspired with the spirit of economic and social justice? Not uniformly — if we may credit their testimony. It is not needful to repeat it; I will not pain your ears with the recital. Reasonable workingmen recognize the fact that there are employers who are disposed to treat them with entire justice; but the general opinion of the working class is that the employing class is bound to get the lion's share of the products of industry; and, as a rule, wherever it can, that it lengthens the day and increases the task and lessens the wage — crowding the workman down to the verge of starvation or over it. And I am bound to say that the careful investigations which have been made into the conditions of the laboring classes in such centers as Pittsburgh and Bethlehem and Lawrence, give some strong confirmation of the workingman's judgment. But if it is true, then we must admit that our democracy has signally failed to inspire the other section of our industrial society with the spirit of economic and social justice.

Suppose we ask the private citizens as a class what they think about the office-holding class. All intelligent citizens would say that no sweeping statements can be made; that there are many faithful, intelligent, conscientious, efficient office holders; but the general consensus of opinion would be that there is a strong tendency among men in public office to multiply sinecures and perquisites; to shorten hours and lighten tasks; to get a good deal more money for their services than they could expect to get in private

THE INTERPRETER

positions, and to exercise a great deal less vigilance and economy in working for the public than they would exercise in working for themselves. That is the popular belief, and I think that there are some grounds for it.

But what would the people in office say, if they were questioned, about the people out of office? I have heard them, a good many times, complain bitterly that the people out of office are grossly neglectful of their duties, and greedy in their relations to the Commonwealth; that the great majority of them, in dealing with the city or the state, expect to get a good deal more than market price for their wares; that a great many of them are very unwilling to assume any personal responsibility for good citizenship; that most so-called good citizens are more inclined to find fault with the people in office than they are to encourage and support them in the performance of their duty; that, in short, the average citizen is much more concerned to get as much as he can out of the Commonwealth, than to contribute his full share of service to its support.

Now if anything like this is true it would seem that the relation to the Commonwealth, both of the people in office and of the people out of office, is far from what it ought to be; that there is a great lack of the spirit of social and economic justice on both sides of this relation. And without further analysis, I am sure that we shall be constrained to admit the truth of the statement from which we started, that our "popular government has been tested and found wanting in the great business of informing society

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

upon a large scale with the spirit of social and economic justice." And yet this would seem to be the "great business" of popular government. If we have a kind of government which fails here, something serious must be the matter with it. What is the matter?

I think it is nothing less than this. The people have failed to grasp the essential attribute of rulership. The people are the rulers, but they have never yet got hold of the real meaning and spirit of rulership.

What constitutes a good ruler? It is the capacity and the passion for disinterested, unselfish service. No man who lacks that quality can be a good ruler. You know what Jesus said about that: "He that would be great among you shall be your servant, and he that is chief shall be servant of all." "You call me Lord and Master," he said, "and so I am; but I am among you as one that serveth." That is the business of a king or a magistrate. That is the very foundation of the right to rule. About that, since Jesus spoke, there has been no doubt among men of insight. Most of the chief rulers of Christendom clearly recognize this truth. Some of them do not live up to it very well, but all of them declare it to be their purpose. Any monarch in Christendom who proclaimed that the political power was his and that he meant to use it for his own aggrandizement,—to look out for himself, first of all,—would be hurled from his throne before he was a month older. There can be no question about it,—the first qualification of a ruler is the capacity and the passion of

THE INTERPRETER

service. From all suspicion of egoistic motive he must keep himself free.

Now when, as in a democracy, the rulership is distributed among the people, this capacity and passion for unselfish service must go along with the power. It matters not how many or how few the rulers are, this spirit must be in them all. If the main business of the rulers is looking out for themselves, then the more there are of them the worse the government will be.

If the power of government should be handed down from a king whose function was unselfish service, to a people all of whom, or most of whom, accepted it selfishly, either shirking the exercise of it whenever they could, or using it mainly for their own profit, the democracy thus created would be no gain over monarchy; it would be a vast and fearful loss.

Now I fear that *we*, the people of the United States, have accepted our sovereignty without any clear comprehension of the altruistic purpose, the purpose of service, which sovereignty implies. It is not true of all of us, I hope; but is it not true of most of us? Do we use the franchise as though it were a call to unselfish service? Considering the matter as we must, collectively, have we as a people conducted our government as though it was our ruling purpose to serve the common weal? Have we so conducted our government as to inform and inspire the people with the spirit of social and economic justice? Are our governments in city and state and nation apt to be of such a

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

character that those who are brought into contact with them,—young or old,—find the wish and the purpose kindled in them to render to all men their dues,—to do as they would be done by,—to spend and be spent in unselfish service?

I fear that we cannot in any large sense claim any such thing for ourselves as rulers. I fear that in politics, as in business, we have generally assumed that every man would look out sharply first for his own interest — that this indeed was his primary duty; and that if all men did this, giving themselves little or no concern for the common weal, a wise Providence, combining and overruling all these individual selfishnesses, would work out a beneficent result. Something like that is the social philosophy on which our political and economic society has been built.

It now seems to be clear that this wisdom has not been wholly justified by her children. There does not appear to be any supernatural alembic in which aggregations of individual egoism are transmuted into a collective altruism. On the contrary our experience shows that a society in which individuals are encouraged to look out sharply for their own interests, political and industrial, and to give themselves no particular concern for the common good, will be a society in which there will be no social coherence; in which envy and suspicion and ill-will will prevail; in which there will be a plentiful lack of the spirit of economic and social justice. Such a result seems to be natural and inevitable. What the nation soweth that shall it also reap.

THE INTERPRETER

The spirit of discontent, of smouldering enmity and antagonism, which darkens our sky and threatens our peace, breaking out, now and then, in tumult and riot, is the legitimate fruit of the social philosophy by which we have been trying to guide our lives.

It is the heart of the nation that is thus disturbed and embittered. And the heart of the nation is sore because it has been transgressing the law of its own being. It has been trying to build up a social organism by the use of unsocial forces. It has been putting its trust in the beneficence of selfishness, when it ought to have known that the law of all life is love. It must have known that a king could only rule by serving his people, but it has imagined that a democracy could rule if every ruler served himself. That is its sin,—the sin which has brought upon it discontent and trouble and confusion and fear.

What is the remedy? It is not distinctly named in any of the recent political platforms. It is far more radical than any thing which any of the politicians have proposed. It is not the suppression, by force, of discontent. It is not well-drilled militia and Gatling guns. It is a costly peace that is purchased at such a price — a peace that is no peace.

It is not the reorganization of political machinery and of the methods of production. It is not, let me say, the remedy of Socialism,—of the kind of socialism which puts its trust in economic readjustments. There are

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

Socialists, no doubt, who are fully aware that something deeper is needed than a reorganization of the methods of distribution. But the ordinary remedies on which the current Socialistic propaganda puts the emphasis do not go to the heart of the matter. For when rent and interest and profit are all eliminated, you still have left the undisciplined human desire which knows no limit. "Socialism in essence," says a penetrating thinker, "is not so much a promise of satisfaction *as a call for self-restraint*. Far from satisfying us automatically by giving us all we want, or all we think we ought to have, the *chief function of a socialistic state would be precisely that of imposing just limits on our desires*. Are we ready for these limitations? No covetous community could bear the socialistic yoke for a day. In promoting Socialism we are invoking a system of authority which will put restraints on *all* classes precisely at that point where hitherto *no* class has shown itself willing to put restraints on itself. . . . The question is not whether the system is good enough for the people, but whether the people are good enough for the system."

"No covetous community could bear the Socialistic yoke for a day." It is because all our communities are essentially covetous communities — eager to get more — every man pushing his own interest — that discontent is rife and our peace is threatened. It is just simple, plain, old-fashioned selfishness that is the matter with us, nothing else. That is the malady from which we are suffering.

THE INTERPRETER

That is the sin whose retribution is now scourging us. That is the sin from which the nation needs to be saved. And the prophet's word to this nation today is just this word: Cast away from you your selfishness, and make you a new heart and a new spirit, for why will ye die, O American nation? You cannot build your national life on the foundations of selfishness. You cannot live and prosper by the rule of every man for himself. That is the way of death for nations as well as for men. Least of all forms of government can a democracy thrive under an egoistic régime. All the people can rule only on condition that all the people serve. If all the people are habitually seeking their own, strifes, feuds, oppression, insurrections will tear your democracy to fragments.

The most profound treatise on Democracy that this nation has yet produced — Mr. Croly's "Promise of American Life," — gives us on its last pages a statement of fundamental truth which we do well to ponder:

"It is very easy and in a sense perfectly true to declare that democracy needs for its fulfilment a peculiarly high standard of moral behavior; and it is even more true to declare that a democratic scheme of moral values reaches its consummate expression in the religion of human brotherhood. . . . The task of individual and social regeneration must remain incomplete and impoverished until the conviction and the feeling of brotherhood enters into possession of the human spirit."

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

This is not the dictum of a doctor of divinity, it is the verdict of a master of political science.

Does not the prophet's scorching message come home to us today with power? Is not this, my fellow countrymen, the word we need to hear and lay to heart? I tell you that it is a solemn word, an urgent word. What this nation chiefly needs is not more laws or more political or industrial machinery; it needs a new heart, a new spirit, a new ruling motive. It needs a public opinion saturated with the spirit of social justice. It needs rulers,— and by rulers I mean first of all voters,— whose hearts are warm with the spirit of service.

We say sometimes that the cure for the evils of democracy is more democracy, but this does not mean more competition; it means more brotherhood. So far as our land is concerned, if there is religion enough among us to fill the heart of this democracy with the spirit of brotherhood, we can save the nation.

Do I speak as though that result were problematical? No; I have never doubted that the Kingdom I have always prayed for is coming; that the gospel I have always preached is true. I believe that the democracy is getting a new heart, and a new spirit, that the nation is being saved. It is not yet saved and its salvation depends on you and me, but it is being saved. There are signs that a *new way of thinking, a new social consciousness*, are taking possession of the nation. I have no time now to tell of the things I have seen and heard; let me mention just one.

THE INTERPRETER

In that wonderful trust-built city on Lake Michigan, a little crippled newsboy died the other day. He had given his life to save the life of a young girl unknown to him. He had willingly undergone great suffering, in the belief that he might save her, hoping, of course, to keep his own life; but when he saw that his own life was to be forfeited, he yielded it cheerfully: "I have been of some use, after all," he said. Do you remember his name? Let us not forget it. Billy Rugh is not the only one who has given his life that another might live. It was not his sacrifice, so much as *the response to it*, that stirred my heart. Gary is one of the seven wonders of our commercial world. Of all the cities of the nation it is, says one, "most emphatically the city of dollars, built with the millions of millionaires." But this city of thirty thousand sent half of its population last Sunday to gather about the coffin of Billy Rugh. Fifteen thousand mourners stood there in the street, because no room could hold them, listening with uncovered head to the funeral prayers and singing with streaming eyes, "Nearer my God to Thee." The little crippled newsboy had brought them all nearer to God. For two hours "the mighty enginery of the Steel Works that knows no Sabbath," was hushed to silence in honor of this deed of sacrifice. I suppose that none of the millionaire builders of Gary could have called forth such a tribute.

They are going, I believe, to build Billy Rugh a monument, but an editor says truly: "The only adequate memorial is

A NEW HEART FOR THE NATION

a community made more coherent, hearts made more tender, hands made more willing, religion made more real.” That memorial, made without hands, has already been dedicated, and we may see in it one of the signs of a new heart in the nation.

IX

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

IX

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes; but what are these among so many? — John 6 : 9.

The miracles ascribed to Christ serve as illustrations or instances of the working of spiritual law in the natural world, — reversing Drummond's phrase. Every exercise of spiritual power, of human choice or volition, upon the lines of physical causation, is, in strictness, supernatural. Man is a supernatural being; he must be if he is a child of God and is made in God's image; and whenever he exercises his prerogative of freedom in changing the direction or combining the action of natural forces, he brings to pass something which would not come to pass in what we call the order of nature. When man was given dominion over nature it was expressed in the terms of that commission that he was a supernatural being. That, I take it, is one of the true insights of the creation story. All the products of human art and skill, all the achievements of civilization are supernatural. The primeval forest, the uninhabited desert are natural; the cultivated field not less than the busy city are products of a power above nature, subduing and transforming nature to the uses of the spirit.

THE INTERPRETER

It is not necessary, therefore, to be startled or scandalized by suggestions of supernatural action; it is the largest part of the everyday experience of human beings. The spiritual and the supernatural are synonymous terms. Whenever there is a free intelligence at work upon the lines of natural causation there is supernatural action.

The miracles of Christ are peculiar in this, that they are easily translatable into terms of the spirit; they are object lessons in which spiritual laws are illustrated.

This feeding of the five thousand is an illustration of the spiritual law that our resources are multiplied by expending them. The more one gives away of any spiritual possession the more one has left. The more one gives of truth, or love, or hope, or courage, or sympathy — of the real bread of life — the more one has to give. If you can feed five thousand with the manna that cometh down from heaven, your power to supply such wants will be five thousand times greater than if you had kept it all for yourself.

That is one great spiritual truth which the miracle suggests, but there is another to which I desire to draw your attention, the preciousness of fragments.

It would seem that this boy had in his basket but the leavings, or remnants, of a feast. Some little company, perhaps, had had a wayside luncheon, and this was what was left. Five barley loaves, thin hard biscuit, and a few small fishes. "And what are they," the disciples asked, simply enough, "among so many?" What they were to learn was that fragments are not to be despised or thrown

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

away; that wisdom and love may make them very productive and very serviceable to human needs.

It is a lesson that we are beginning to learn, in our human economy. No small share of the economic gain which has been made during the last generation has consisted in the utilization, by our manufacturers, in what are called by-products, of materials that once were cast away as remnants or refuse. We have learned that fragments may have great economic value.

Think of the wide range of utilities, and beauties that have been evoked by the transfiguration of a substance so offensive and troublesome as coal tar. Fifty years ago it was a nuisance to be got rid of; today it is the basis of many of our most beautiful and remunerative industries. A long list of the conveniences, necessities and luxuries of life could be traced directly to this black slime.

The same thing is true of the by-products of petroleum. In all our homes and in many of our factories and laboratories, as well as in the pharmacopeia of the physician and the apothecary, are substances of value which have been saved out of what was once the refuse of the refinery.

What they do at the slaughter houses we have heard a good deal about. And we understand, of course, that many of those processes are wholly beneficent; and that great additions are made to the wealth of the country by these transformations.

These are only samples of the way in which we are learning that the fragments of one process may be the

THE INTERPRETER

staples of another; that human intelligence can find high values in scraps and left-overs.

Perhaps I should be going too far afield for an illustration if I should say that the most precious and the most marvellous physical substance now known to man — the substance whose properties seem to be challenging all our physical theories, and bringing us, as it were, face to face with the infinite — that radium seems to have been discovered in connection with a kind of mineral vagrant, — a poor relation of the nobler minerals, flung out to waste on the scrap-heap of the creation.

In production this utilizing of waste has gone far; in many businesses it makes the difference between profit and loss. The entire gain is found in incidental economies.

If we were only as careful to make the most of everything in consumption as we are in production we should soon be rich beyond the dreams of avarice. One of the greatest curses of the land is a reckless, lavish, vulgar consumption; a spending for the sake of spending; a coarse kind of cowardice which makes rich people and poor people alike ashamed of frugality; which leads them to despise the divine wisdom of the Master who bade his disciples, after he had fed the five thousand, to gather up the fragments which remained that nothing be lost. It is to be hoped that as our civilization gets a little older we shall outgrow this vulgarity, and shall learn, in the administration of our homes, the fine art of getting sustenance and pleasure and beauty out of much that we now throw away.

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

But these illustrations are stepping-stones to higher truths. The principle is full of suggestion and admonition to us as we ascend into the realm of conduct and character. Fragments here often have great value, value which we do not always recognize. You might almost say that a man's character is tested by the use which he makes of the fragments of time and opportunity. Because they seem so slight and incomplete we are often inclined to neglect them, to despise them.

Here is a pupil approaching the end of a term. His work has not, on the whole, been very good; he is rather ashamed of the record, but the practical question is, What will he do with the time that is left? There is but a week or two — a few days, possibly; just a fragment of a term; what shall be done with it? Let us assume that he is sorry and ashamed that he has done no better; that is the right attitude toward the past. But how about the rest of the days? There is a test of character in them. Too often you will hear him saying: "Oh, well, it's no use! Too late to make up for a failure. I'll try to do better next term, but this term might as well go for a bad job. I'll just take it easy and have a good time!"

That is a very demoralizing attitude. The essence of all unfaithfulness and moral cowardice is in it. The student who has any adequate sense of responsibility for his conduct will say rather: "True there is but a fragment of a term left, but I will make the most of it. I will show that my regret for lost time is not hypocrisy by filling these days

THE INTERPRETER

brimful of faithful work. I'll have a record of a few days, at least, of which I shall not be ashamed." Just a fragment of a term, used like that, may be the foundation of a new manhood; while used in the other way it may help to blight a whole life.

Men and women often draw near to the end of periods of life — years, for example — with some such dissatisfaction over their past achievements, and then, realizing that they have not accomplished all that they hoped, and seeing that little time is left, weakly and faithlessly throw away that little, instead of making a brave stand upon it, determined to redeem the remnant of the year from folly and to consecrate it to high uses.

And I have sometimes seen men drawing near the end of life, who seemed to be under the spell of the same craven logic. "Too late to make up for a bad day's work," they seemed to say; "let it all go; fling it into the junk-pile!" and so they send into eternity:

"A life of nothings, nothing worth,
From that first nothing ere his birth,
To that last nothing under earth."

Can you think of anything much sadder than this? And is it not very needful that we get into our minds the truth that our treatment of these fragments of time is not a light matter; that it is a vital matter; that infidelity here is a very touchstone of character? It thrills the heart to see a man reversing all this process; seizing what remains of his opportunity, and without any weak repining over

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

past failures, putting all that is left to the highest and best uses. "Thank God for this time!" we hear him saying. "I wish there were more, but this is mine, and it is precious. It shall not be wasted. I will make the most of it!"

One always thinks, when such an instance appears, of Columbus on his caravel, the last night before land was sighted. His mutinous crew had insisted on turning back; he had extorted from them the concession of one more day. That was all that was left, but how full he would fill it of hope and courage!

"One day more
These muttering shoal brains leave the helm to me:
• • • • •

One poor day!
Remember whose, and not how short it is!
It is God's day, it is Columbus's!
A lavish day! One day, with life and heart,
Is more than time enough to find a world!"

With fragments of life, of faculty and endowment, as well as of time, we sometimes have to deal. What volumes of reproof and incitement and instruction in righteousness we find in the achievements of men who, although lamed and mutilated by the loss of the most valuable natural powers, have contrived to do beautiful and valuable work in various lines of human enterprise!

In the picture gallery of the old city of Antwerp, a good many years ago, I found a man sitting before an easel, copying one of the fine modern pictures on the wall,— a man whom almost any one would have said, at a glance,

THE INTERPRETER

was not intended by nature to be an artist. He was absolutely destitute of arms, not the shortest stump protruded from the shoulder, and his lower limbs were, I think, so crippled that he could not walk, but he was a painter, nevertheless, and a good painter. The copy which he had nearly completed was an excellent copy; my limited knowledge of such work did not detect any fault in the technique; he seemed to me to have caught and reproduced very skillfully the spirit of the figure piece on which he was engaged. His feet were doing the duty that should have fallen to his hands; he sat in his high chair and held the brushes between his toes, he mixed the paint on his palette, he laid it on delicately and dexterously; his foot could say to his hand, "I have no need of you." An extreme instance, no doubt; but what a rebuke there is in it to the faint hearts and feeble wills who are ready to give over all earnest endeavors on account of some slight impediment or deficiency of power. When such a fraction of a man can claim for himself the rights and dignities of high manhood, who needs to despair? The least human faculty can be very precious, if we make the most of it.

The miracle of Helen Keller always comes to our minds, of course, when we are thinking of these things; and also of that little lad in our own city who seems to be advancing very bravely along the same path. When, from the human equipment, the two royal faculties of sight and hearing are both clean gone forever, it seems to be not much more than a fragment; yet with these pitifully reduced resources

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

what wonderful things Miss Keller has learned to do; how large and rich and beautiful is the life that she is living!

Less marvellous but hardly less beautiful is such a life as that of George Matheson, the poet and prophet, whose insights many of us have shared so largely. Smitten with blindness at the end of his college course he faltered not for a moment, but went straight forward in the career he had marked out for himself, finishing his theological studies with distinction, then entering at once upon the active work of the ministry, in which he became not only the pastor and leader of a great church, and a preacher of distinguished power, but a scholar of recognized rank and a writer of world-wide fame, the author of twenty or thirty volumes, which have made all thoughtful men his debtor.

These great examples of men and women, who, with sadly broken powers have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises vouchsafed to few of their kind, may serve to show us that even fragmentary lives may be fruitful and luminous, if courage and hope and love do but inform them.

My thought has been led on to another application of this principle which may have meaning for some of you. It may be that I am speaking to men and women who feel that their religious belief has become altogether fragmentary. They started out in life, perhaps, with a good stock of dogma; with fully elaborated and symmetrical creeds; they supposed themselves to be in possession of a pretty complete explanation of all the really important things

THE INTERPRETER

in the heavens above and in the earth beneath. It was traditional belief, of course; they had not tried to think it out and see whether it represented their real insights; they accepted it as the faith of their fathers, and as the thing to which it was proper and right for them to give their assent.

In the course of these inquisitive and critical years some of these beliefs have become uncertain. It is not that they have been consciously rejected, but they no longer seem to possess much reality or significance; the terms in which they are stated are not convincing; and, in truth, the old creed is not now much more than a remnant. It is a state of things which often troubles conscientious people. What shall they do about it?

Sometimes they try to bring themselves, by their sense of loyalty to the past, and the remembrance of the blessed ones who once held these propositions so firmly, to reaffirm them all, silencing the protests of reason, and endeavoring to override their logic by their will. But that is a dubious procedure. You can never afford to try to force the consent of your mind to propositions which do not appear to you reasonable.

A more common solution of the difficulty, I fear, is that of those who are inclined to argue that since so little is left it might as well be all thrown away together. Fragments of a creed, they reason, are worthless; let us get rid of them all, and turn our minds to other themes. .

If any one is listening to me who has been inclined to

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

this faithless policy, I desire, right here, to remonstrate. Fragments here are worth as much as fragments anywhere, and it is the worst kind of waste to neglect or despise them. I am very sure that you will find, when you come to scrutinize the remnants of your faith, that they are very precious. If you will cherish them, and bring them together, as one collects the brands of a sinking wood fire, you may soon find them kindling one another into a cheerful glow. I will venture the assertion that there is no one here who has not enough left to believe in, if he will only reaffirm it and make the most of it, to make him a very brave and happy man. To utilize the faith we have, be it little or much; to cling to it, to rejoice in it, to live by it — this is the counsel of wisdom.

Quite apropos of this I have found in a book which many of you have read, "The Upton Letters," by Mr. A. C. Benson, — some testimony that I want to repeat to you. He is speaking of the inevitable changes in life, of the sense of uncertainty and emptiness which they often bring and of our need of something of the nature of faith in which at such hours we may find anchorage. But he says:

"It must be a deeper faith than the faith of a dogmatic creed; for that is shifting, too, every day, and the simplest creed holds some admixture of human temperament and human error.

"To me there are but two things that seem to point to hope. The first is the strongest and deepest of human things, the power of love — not, I think, the more vehement

THE INTERPRETER

and selfish forms of love, the desire of youth for beauty, the consuming love of the mother for the infant,—for these have some physical admixture in them. But the tranquil and purer manifestations of the spirit,—the love of a father for a son, of a friend for a friend; that love which can light up a face on the edge of the dark river, and can smile in the very throes of pain. That seems to me the only thing which holds out a tender defiance against change and suffering and death.

“And then there is the faith in the vast creative Mind that bade us be, mysterious and strange as are its manifestations, harsh and indifferent as they sometimes seem, yet at worst they seem to betoken a loving purpose, thwarted by some cross-current, like a mighty river contending with little obstacles. Why the obstacles should be there, and how they came into being, is dark indeed. But there is enough to make us believe in a Will that does its utmost and that is assured of some bright and far-off victory.

“A faith in God, and a faith in Love; and here seem to me to be the strength and power of the Christian revelation. It is to these two things that Christ pointed men. Though overlaid with definition, with false motive, with sophistry, with pedantry, this is the deep secret of the Christian Creed; and if we dare to link our will with the Will of God, however feebly, however complainingly,—if we desire and endeavor not to sin against love, not to nourish hate or strife, to hold out the hand again and again

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

to any message of sympathy or trust, not to struggle for our own profit, not to reject tenderness, to believe in the good faith and the good-will of men, we are then in the way. We may make mistakes, we may fall a thousand times, but the key of heaven is in our hands."

A faith in God; a faith in Love; soberly, my friend, are not these elements among the things that remain to you — that have not been shaken? Well, if you will hold to these, if you will rejoice in them, if you will lift them up into the light and live by them, you will find that you have a creed that will fill your life with hope and courage and patience. Believe in these things with all your heart, and all the rest of the beliefs you need will be added unto you.

There is one more lesson in this parable of the fragments on which I wish to dwell for a moment before we go. I may be speaking to some one who feels that something more precious than a creed has gone to wreck, and that is manhood or womanhood. There has been failure in conduct, in character; and as you think on these losses and disasters, it seems to you that out of the ruin there is not much left, that such bits of virtue, such scraps of integrity as survive are hardly worth saving.

You, my friend, are the one above all others to whom this truth ought to be reassuring and inspiring. If our gospel means anything at all, its message comes direct to you in this doctrine of the fragments. To the broken, the stranded, the wrecked, the distressed and scattered, its first words are spoken. What it tells you is that past

THE INTERPRETER

failures and disasters, no matter how tragical and bewildering, are not hopeless; that he who made the worlds out of nothing can take the remnants of your manhood and mould them into a complete and beautiful life. “Wilt thou be made whole?” — that is his very word to you.

And those fragments that you are almost on the point of casting away — consider what they are, and whose image and superscription is stamped on them! Do you not find among them some things quite too precious to part with; some memories that are very dear; some hopes that have not wholly withered; some admirations for things high and fair; some loyalties that still hold? Better than all is the royal Will, the umpire of destiny, your birthright as a man. It may have been lamed and enfeebled by disobedience, but it is yours, and you must not despise it.

Bring together these fragments of your manhood, I implore you. Nay bring them to Him who blessed the loaves beside the sea, and get his estimate of what they are worth to you and to the world, and get his blessing upon them. Then do with them what was done with the fragments that the little lad contributed, — begin to use them in some loving ministry. Set your crippled powers to serving some who are needier than you are and more forlorn! You can find them; doubt it not.

Some of you cry out against such counsel, I know. You say that it is absurd to ask one who is little better than a wreck himself to think about rescuing others; better wait till he has saved himself before he begins to offer to others

THE VALUE OF FRAGMENTS

the helping hand. Ah, my friend, right there you miss the whole meaning of life. The people who wait till they themselves are safe before they help their neighbors are never saved themselves, and never save anybody else. A man in a wreck who said: "Let me first get ashore, and then I will try to rescue somebody," would not be likely to save anybody but he might have some excuse for his conduct, for he might reasonably fear that any one whom he sought to rescue would drag him down; but in the spiritual realm that law is exactly reversed; to grapple bravely with one who is sinking is the surest way to keep yourself afloat; to turn away from him is to tie a millstone to your own feet.

" Is thy burden hard and heavy? Do thy steps drag wearily?
Help to bear thy brother's burden; God will bear both it and thee.
Numb and weary on the mountains, wouldst thou sleep amidst the
snow?
Chafe that frozen form beside thee, and together both shall glow."

Do not try to carry over the maxims of the competitive realm into this kingdom of life; here all those rules are reversed; it is by giving that we are enriched, it is by helping others that we get strength for ourselves; it is by dispensing our fragments that they are multiplied.

" To sacrifice, to share,
Giving as Jesus gave,
For others' wants to care,
Not our own lives to save, —

" This is the living bread
Which cometh down from heaven;
Whereof our souls are fed,
The pure, immortal leaven;

THE INTERPRETER

“ The hidden manna this,
Whereof who eateth, he
Grows up in perfectness
Of Christian symmetry.”

Thus, my friend, I have tried to show you how much value there is even in what may seem to you but the remnants of a life too much of which has been wasted; how sacred and significant they are; how beautiful and fruitful they may become. None of those other wonders in the preservation and transfiguration of waste is to be compared with this; it is the one splendid thing that may happen in God’s universe. A soul that is sinking into sin and shame may be saved and restored to the gladness and glory of manhood. No wonder there is joy in the presence of the angels of God when such a thing happens. And it may happen to you, today!

X

THE JOY OF THE LORD

X

THE JOY OF THE LORD

The joy of the Lord is your strength.— Neh. 8 : 10.

It is the day of a great festival in Jerusalem, after the return from the captivity. The city had been devastated by the conquering Chaldeans and the people had been carried away captive to Babylon. Under Cyrus, several years before, a portion of the captives had been permitted to return, but they were very poor and greatly disheartened, the surrounding tribes kept harassing them, and many of them doubtless were wishing that they were safely back in Babylon. But Nehemiah, the Jewish cup-bearer of King Artaxerxes, hearing of the sorry plight of his countrymen in Jerusalem, sought and obtained a commission from the king to go to Jerusalem, and take charge of the rebuilding of the city. Nehemiah was one of the men who do things; the whole situation was changed for the better as soon as he took hold of it; the walls of the city were rebuilt, the marauders were scattered and the people were settled in thrift and peace in their ancient capital.

Meanwhile Ezra the Scribe had by some means obtained a copy of the law. What book this was we do not know, but the scholars suggest that it may have been the priestly

THE INTERPRETER

code which is one of the chief constituent documents of which the Pentateuch is made up. Whatever it was, Ezra was desirous of presenting it to the people; and when it was determined to have a great festival, in celebration of the rebuilding of the walls and the temple, he seized on this occasion to bring this book and its contents to the knowledge of the people. So a rostrum was built in one of the open spaces, and all the people, — not only the adults, men and women, but the young folks, — as many as “could understand,” the record says, were gathered together at daybreak; and they bowed their faces to the ground, while Ezra lifted up the sacred roll, and blessed the Lord, the great God; and then they stood up and lifted up their hands and said, Amen, Amen. Then Ezra began to read the book of the law from his pulpit of wood; and as he gave forth deliberately the solemn sentences, a group of a dozen or more of the Levites, standing about at a little distance, caught up the words and repeated them to those who stood farther off; and they not only gave the words distinctly, the record says, but they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

It was a great day for the Jewish people, no doubt; it was the beginning of a new era. Up to this day their religion had been, almost exclusively, the religion of the priest and the altar; from this day forward it became, more and more, the religion of the book and the teacher.

So Ezra read, and the Levites exhorted and expounded, and presently the people began to weep. What do you

THE JOY OF THE LORD

suppose was the reason of their grief? Did they feel that this law, thus rehearsed to them, was going to be a burdensome imposition? Did they have some dawning sense of those aridities and formalities of which Paul speaks so feelingly in his letter to the Romans? No, I doubt if they had any sense of that defect; they were by no means sufficiently developed to realize that a religion by commandment is a hard religion to live by; that the letter killeth; that inspiration is better than injunction and prohibition. Probably neither the people, nor Ezra the scribe, had any such misgiving in their minds as this. All that they looked for in religion was stiff and severe rules, — with some provision for wiping off the old score when their transgressions had accumulated. It was not, probably, the rigor of the rule that made them weep.

Perhaps they began to cry when the law was read to them for the same reason that a good many people nowadays are disposed to be very solemn and tearful when you begin to talk to them about religion. It is a common impression that to be religious is to be melancholy; that thoughts of God and our relations to him are naturally depressing thoughts. There are words in the Bible which seem to teach this. The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes, in one of his darker moods, tells us that it is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting; that sorrow is better than laughter; for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. And this is true at certain times, and for certain persons; perhaps it was

THE INTERPRETER

true of those whom this preacher had in mind while he was writing these words. There are a great many light-headed, frivolous, irresponsible people for whom such a vision of the sorrow which is inseparable from all life would be medicinal.

But we must be careful how we make of every maxim we find in the Bible a universal rule; for many of them are only intended to meet certain exceptional conditions, and the authors are by no means always careful to give them philosophical breadth and completeness. Even this *ecclesiast* sings a very different tune in some portions of this very book.

“Then I commended mirth” he says; “because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat and drink and to be merry, for that shall abide with him all the days of his life which God hath given him under the sun.”

“Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God hath already accepted thy works. Let thy garments be always white and let not thy head lack ointment.”

That is the voice of another of his moods; it is not by any means a safe generalization for conduct, but it is fit counsel for some persons, at some seasons. So far as this moralist is concerned it is not at all safe to take his maxims at random and try to elevate them into rules of life. These much-quoted texts, therefore, which put the stamp of their approval on the somber life, are not to be taken too

THE JOY OF THE LORD

seriously. But these people had not read the preaching of Koheleth, for his book was written at a much later day; and it is not at all probable that their grief had its sources in that sentimental pietism which feels that one cannot be religious without crying.

There must have been some reason for their weeping. What was it? The most credible, perhaps the most creditable supposition is that they were profoundly impressed with the fact that there had been a wide discrepancy between their own conduct and the provisions of this law. A great multitude of things were commanded in it which they had never done, and of which, perhaps, they had hardly heard; a great many things were forbidden in it which they had been practising all their lives. A good many of these things were ceremonials, to be sure; but they were things commanded just the same; and I doubt whether those old Hebrews made much of the distinction which we have learned to make between the moral and the ceremonial law; the disobedience of one kind of law was just as sinful, in their judgment, as the disobedience of any other kind of law; and while Ezra was reading the law, section by section, and the Levites were lining it out, and they were listening to the things commanded and forbidden, the thought came home to them that their lives had been full of transgression and disobedience. If this law was really the expression of the will of God concerning them, then they had been ignoring his will or setting it at naught. And if, as may well have been the case, those fearful

THE INTERPRETER

maledictions against disobedience which the Book of Deuteronomy contains were part of the law read in their hearing,—if that fierce litany of blessings and curses was sounding in their ears,—then we need not wonder that they found themselves in a melancholy mood. “For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.”

But this was not the kind of response which Ezra and his Levites were looking for. It was a great festival which they had tried to organize; it was not a fast; it was not a penitential occasion. “The Israelite leaders,” says Dr. Adeny, “did not share the feeling of grief. In their eyes the sorrow of the Jews was a great mistake. It was even a wrong thing for them thus to distress themselves. Ezra loved the law, and therefore it was a dreadful surprise for him to discover that the subject of his devoted studies was regarded so differently by his brethren. Nehemiah and the Levites shared his more cheerful view of the situation.” And therefore they protested vehemently against defiling this day of delight with these unseemly wailings. “This day is holy unto the Lord your God,” said Nehemiah; “mourn not nor weep. . . . Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared; for this day is holy unto our God; neither be ye grieved; for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

This I suppose was the passage out of which grew our Puritan Thanksgiving Day, for our New England fathers

THE JOY OF THE LORD

were always quoting these words in their Thanksgiving services.

Upon the last sentence, which is our text, our thought may well pause. “The joy of the Lord.” The phrase is not a familiar one. There are a great many texts in which we are bidden to rejoice in the Lord; and it is not a remote suggestion that right relations with him will inspire joy in us. “This ‘joy of the Lord,’ ” says one commentator, “is the joy that springs up in our hearts by means of our relation to God. It is a God-given gladness, and it is found in communion with God.” But this seems to me to stop just short of the real meaning of the text. It is the joy of the Lord of which these worshippers are bidden to think, and not merely the joy which he inspires in us. The truth was suggested to them that the great God is himself a happy being; that that is the thought of him with which we need to become familiar. Indeed it seems difficult to imagine how our relations with him could make us glad unless his life is a joyful life. Intimacy with one who is morose or moody or cold is not apt to fill any one with joy. It is quite impossible, psychologically, for us to rejoice in the Lord unless we are able to rejoice with him.

I doubt if this is, with all of us, a common thought of God. We think of him as righteous, as holy, as just, as kind, as compassionate, but we do not often think of him as one whose life is full of joy. But might we not, if we considered more deeply and seriously, find room for such a conception? Might we not discover as we walk amid the

THE INTERPRETER

fresh beauty of these June days, some reasons for believing that He who hath made all these things is not only powerful and wise and beneficent, but that he is happy.

“ He sendeth forth springs into the valleys,
They run among the mountains,
They give drink to every beast of the field;
The wild asses quench their thirst,
By them the birds of the heaven have their habitations,
They sing among the branches.
He watereth the mountains from his chambers,
The earth hath its full from the fruit of thy works.

“ He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,
And herbs for the service of man,
That he may bring food out of the earth,
And wine to make glad the heart of man,
Oil to make his face to shine,
And bread to strengthen man’s heart.”

Is it conceivable that he whose life is the source of all this gladness is not himself glad? “ Thou hast put gladness in my heart!” cries the Psalmist. It is out of the fulness of his own life that all his good gifts come.

God is the Creator. On the side of power that is the greatest thought that we can think about him. The Creator of the world and all the worlds; the author of the Universe; the Source of Law and Life and Love. Law is not something that just happened to be; Life is not something that sprang out of nothing; Love is not a breath that bloweth nowhither. God is the Author of them all. And the universe is full of the wonders of his power.

THE JOY OF THE LORD

“ O Lord, how manifold are thy works;
In wisdom hast thou made them all.”

This work of Creation is always in progress. “ My Father worketh hitherto,” said Jesus, “ and I work.” And all that we know of this work of creation makes us believe that it is a perennial source of joy to the Creator. Because we are his children and share his nature, we, in our measure and order, do know something of what Creation means. That is the difference between a man and a thing; a man can create; he can originate new lines of causation. And we know that one of the highest joys possible to man is the joy of creation.

To make a new combination of forces; to give form to a thought; to start a new movement; this is the kind of activity which gives to human beings the keenest pleasure. Not very long ago, a little boy in whose home I was calling and whom I had not seen for some months came bringing to me some little pieces of cabinet work which he had made with his own hands. How his eyes danced! He had found more pleasure in that creative work than any kind of game or contest could possibly have given him, and it was a far higher kind of pleasure.

We are beginning to give our children in school the chance to enter into this joy, the joy of the maker, and if we can only lead them into it far enough, there will be redemption in it. This is the joy of the artist, the joy of creation; and although we have sometimes made art a curse, just as we have religion, by separating it from life, instead of

THE INTERPRETER

mingling it with life, it is, nevertheless, the activity in which men come nearest to God.

The day will come, I trust, when Industry and Art which God hath joined together, will no longer be put asunder by the greed of man. For as Ruskin said, the divorce is one in which both are disrowned and degraded. For Art without Industry is frivolity; and Industry without Art is brutality. Work is always a joy when something of the zest of creation enters into it. When God made man in his own image, he made him not to be a drudge, but a creator.

The point at which I am aiming is that our human experience in many phases helps us to understand that the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not neither is weary, must find in this work of creation an infinite joy.

But his joy is not merely the joy of the mechanician, the artist; it is the joy of the life-giver. It is the joy of parentage. He is the God and Father of us all, and the father's chief joy is in his children. Parental love is the source of the highest and purest joy that human beings know.

Those great words of Jesus — to some of you, in the most sacred moment of life, they have come as the revelation of the deepest secret of existence: “She remembereth no more her sorrow, *for joy that a man is born into the world.*” And you, father, when you held your first-born in your arms and looked into his face, was there not opened in your life a well-spring deeper than you had known before?

THE JOY OF THE LORD

Now God is the Father of us all. This is our Christian faith. He is the One of whom every fatherhood on earth and in heaven is named. The joy of parenthood in its fullest and deepest sense he knows. It is a joy that is never separated from sorrow, in humanity or in divinity,—as we shall see; but it is a joy that is victorious over sorrow, as light is victorious over shadow, as life is the conqueror of death. And this joy of parenthood is the joy of the Lord, his dearest joy, I think. Could you conceive of him as being destitute of that joy? There are those who tell us that the sin of man has cancelled, for the great majority of the race, the fact of the divine fatherhood; that God is not a father to any but the good people. It seems to me a blasphemy against fatherhood to say any such thing. And though his children, through their disobedience, often cause him sorrow, yet the joy which springs from love victorious over sin and death is his eternal portion.

For the joy of redemption is the chief joy of the eternal love. Those three great parables of Jesus — the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son — what are they but the revelation of the joy of the Lord in the restoration of his wandering children. “Rejoice with me,” cries the good shepherd, “for I have found my sheep which was lost.” “Rejoice with me,” says the good woman to her neighbors, “for I have found the piece that was lost.” “Bring forth the best robe and put it on him,” cries the Prodigal’s father, — who is none other than our Father in heaven; “and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his

THE INTERPRETER

feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." And this, if Jesus knew the Father's heart, is the joy of the Lord.

And, finally, for I must not linger on a theme so inspiring, the joy of the Lord finds its deepest source in his sure knowledge of the triumph of his kingdom, which is righteousness and peace and friendship and good will. His redeeming love which suffers to save will win at last, and he knows it. The kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever. The prodigal children, in that far country of strife and animalism, and selfishness, will come to themselves, by and by, and come home to the Father's house. Little by little the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, as it shines in the face of Jesus Christ, will find its way into the darkened minds of men, and they will come to see that egoistic struggle for the good of life is not the law of nature for men; that it is the law of the ape and tiger; that it is contrary to the law of man's higher nature; that the law of good will, of service, of helpfulness, is the only law of human intercourse; and they will throw away the weapons of their warfare and join hands in working for the common good.

For this blessed day the King of love, our Shepherd, has waited long, is waiting still; it cannot be hastened, force cannot bring it in; omnipotence cannot compel it; it cannot come until men choose it as the chief good; and

THE JOY OF THE LORD

they will not choose it until they have tried all the ways of selfishness and found them vain.

But the great God whose patience is infinite knows that the day will come, and out of that knowledge springs the joy that floods the creation. He knows that the day is coming when from under the whole heaven wars shall cease; when the streets of our cities will no more be blocked with the conflict and carnage of quarreling classes; when a better way will be found of settling the terms of labor than that which stops the wheels of industry, and fills a thousand homes with wan-faced women and starving children. And while, to the infinite compassion, this hour of the world's agony and travail must bring unspeakable pain, yet we may well believe that he sees in it all the suicide of war; the demon of strife destroying himself; the beginning of the end of Satan's reign upon the earth. The fearful cost he knows, but he knows also the greatness of the gain; he knows that the time is coming when the children of men, instead of struggling against one another for the good of life and the possession of the earth, will band themselves together to conquer poverty and pestilence; to make war on barrenness and want; to bridle the floods; to subdue the jungles and the swamps; to transfigure the slums, to work with God to bring in the reign of plenty and peace. And it is this great knowledge that fills the heart of the eternal Father with everlasting joy.

Now it is not to be supposed that when Ezra and Nehemiah and their band of Levites stilled the weeping of the

THE INTERPRETER

people that day in old Jerusalem by telling them of the joy of the Lord, that many of them analyzed the phrase as we have done; but the phrase did, undoubtedly, mean something to them; it conveyed to them the idea that the great God whom they loved and worshipped was a happy God, and that his children ought to share his gladness. It was surely a most unseemly thing for the worshippers of One whose life is the outflowing of joy to present to him as their offering on his holy day no better tribute than tears and sobs and wailings. It was a strange way to do him honor. They worship him best who enter into closest fellowship with him, who become partakers of his nature.

But it was not only urged upon them by their teachers that they ought to be sharers in his joy, there was a great consequence of that communion. "The joy of the Lord is your strength." Strength was needed for the work now before them; for the reclamation of the waste places; for the rehabilitation of their ruined homes; for the rebuilding of the commonwealth; for the maintenance of pure and upright and godly lives under these hostile conditions. And for these stern tasks there could be no better tonic than the gladness of God. "All gladness, all cheerfulness," says Dr. McLaren, "has something to do with our efficiency; for it is the prerogative of man that this force comes from his mind, not from his body. For strength there must be hope, for strength there must be joy. If the arm is to smite with vigor, it must smite at the bidding of a calm and light heart."

THE JOY OF THE LORD

These old Hebrews were good enough philosophers, I dare say, to feel the force of these considerations. They knew that for the tasks upon their hands they needed a courageous and efficient people; and that no better inspiration for courage and efficiency could be found than that which would come to them with the knowledge that the great God whom they loved and worshipped was a happy Being who desired them to share his happiness.

I hope that for us there are some deeper and larger reasons for believing this truth than could have been known to them. We have considered some of these reasons. We have learned from Jesus Christ a great deal more about God than they could possibly have known. We know with what tenderness he clothes the lilies and watches the herds and ministers to the wants of all his living creatures, what joy he finds in all the works of his hands. We know something about him, which was never so fully revealed until Jesus made it known; and we cannot, without blurring and distorting the truth as it is in Jesus, have any doubt about his universal Fatherhood, and his redeeming love. That the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ must be a Being of infinite blessedness should not be, to any Christian, an open question.

Our God is a happy God; let us never lose that. And because we believe that he is happy, we know that he is good. Because he is happy we know that he can never have done the kind of things that men are sometimes accusing him of doing. If he had really disinherited all but a

THE INTERPRETER

few of his children,— cut them off and exiled them from his presence; and there were only a few good people in the world for whom he had a Father's love,— he would not be a happy God; of that we are perfectly sure.

But because he is a happy God, we know that all things are working together for good. He knows all the trouble and misery and sin and wrong of this world far better than any of us can know it; and it would be blasphemy to say that he does not care, and moral blindness to argue that it costs him no suffering; he does suffer always for the sins of the world; he does bear about a sorrow that only a God could bear; but through all the suffering there is triumph, and over all the sorrow there is victory.

Something we men know of the merging of these two great experiences. “These two things,” says Dr. Maclaren, “are not contradictory; these two states of mind, both of them the natural operations of any deep faith, of any deep religious feeling, may coexist and blend into one another, so that the gladness is sobered and chastened, and made manly and noble, and that the sorrow is like some thundercloud all streaked with bars of sunshine that go into its deepest depths.” Was it not said of Jesus that it was “because of the joy that was set before him that he endured the cross, despising the shame.”

No; our God is not stolid, passionless, indifferent to our mortal woe; he is a human God; he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust, and our pain and sorrow are his burden; but over all this grief and loss his love is vic-

THE JOY OF THE LORD

torious and triumphant; and the joy of the Lord like the waves of ocean, mighty, multitudinous, is forever breaking on these shores of time.

And it is this joy, the joy that springs out of victorious love, that is our strength. We know that he loves us, and we know that because he is happy, it is well with us. That is to say, it must be well with us if the ruling motives of our lives are in harmony with his great purpose. He is the King of love, and he is subduing the universe to the obedience of love. His joy is in the fulfilment of that great purpose. If you are working with him, his joy will be your strength. If you are working against him, his joy will be your discomfiture.

But to all the great multitude who are seeking to rule their lives by the law of good will, this high assurance of the happiness of God, must bring strength. Let us try to see what it means for each of us.

To you, my friend, laboring up the heavy grade with a load that oppresses you; fighting the inbred sin, with only equivocal victories; discouraged, sometimes, and lonely; you ought to know that this great Friend is glad whenever he thinks of you. For he knows what no one else can know so well,— better, perhaps than you yourself know,— that the thing which you want is the thing that he wants of you — to get the better of the worser self; to get the world and the flesh under your feet; to win out of your weaknesses into a clean, strong, manly life; he knows all this, and he knows that what is your deepest wish is to be

THE INTERPRETER

your portion; and though he is full of compassion for your infirmities and failures, he is happy, happy when he thinks of you; and he wants you to know it, for his joy will be your strength.

If the joy of the Lord is the joy of the Creator and the Life-giver, the joy of the Parent in his offspring, the joy of the Redeemer who is bringing many sons unto glory, the joy of the King of love in the triumph of his Kingdom of good will, then to all the good wishes, the right purposes, the worthy energies of his children, his joy will bring strength.

XI

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

XI

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

Be not, therefore, anxious, saying what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But seek ye first his kingdom and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.—Matt. 6 : 31-33.

There is need that attention be often called to the misleading phrase of the old version of this text, in which we are bidden to “take no thought” for food or raiment, instead of being admonished, as in the correct rendering of the revised version, not to be anxious, not to worry about them. Without forethought for these needs man would be no better than the brutes — not so good as the wisest of them; but one may think of present and future needs and make judicious provision for them, without being consumed with care and anxiety concerning them; and it is this excessive solicitude which is here reproved and not any reasonable care for daily wants.

“Put first things first” — that is the meaning of this counsel. The main thing is to be faithful to the highest we know — the ideal; to that everything else must be subordinate and tributary. “Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and *all these things shall be added unto you.*”

THE INTERPRETER

It is this last phrase which I want you to consider this morning. Just how much does it mean? I sometimes hear it quoted as an assurance that prosperity and plenty will be the reward of those who are faithful in their religious duties. That is the early Old Testament morality, and there are many who still feel that something is wrong if the good man is not a rich man, at any rate a prosperous man. But the New Testament greatly changes the emphasis of this proposition; it teaches us to look in other directions for proofs of the divine approbation. It even goes so far as to say that it is very hard for a rich man to be a good man, and to pronounce a beatitude upon poverty — “Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.” Yet here is an assurance that fidelity to spiritual ideals will bring temporal rewards. Be not anxious about food and raiment; seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and *all these things shall be added unto you.*

But what things? Riches, luxuries, abundance of creature comforts? No; there is no such assurance. Only so much of this world’s goods as your heavenly Father sees that you have need of. That is all you can make out of this promise. And that may be very little. It may not be any more than the Master himself received as the recompence of his supreme devotion to the Kingdom. The Father in heaven knew what he had need of and gave him what was meet. None of us is entitled to complain if he gets no larger reward. It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master and the servant as his Lord.

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

Still the text gives us the assurance that those who put first things first may expect that at least the necessities of life will be theirs. The heavenly Father will see to it that the life which is lived in conformity to his law of love is sustained and preserved, so that it may complete and fulfil itself.

To deny or question that this is the normal human condition seems to me to impeach the creation. It is nothing less than absurd to say that if you live by the law which God has ordained for you to live by, you will lose your life. What kind of a God must it be, who has made such a world as this — that those who try to live in it by the law which he has impressed upon their souls, cannot live at all?

Yet there are people in these days who insist that this is the condition in which we find ourselves. The entire scheme of society, they insist, is radically and totally iniquitous; so that you cannot live the good life in the existing social order; if you attempt it you will lose your life; to keep alive you must so conform to the existing system of things that you will be continually doing evil. This is the way one writer puts it:—

“ However hard or devoutly our wills be set against it, so long as the system exists, we are all competitors in some degree. All of us who live in any measure of comfort, live more or less by economic stealing, no matter what our occupations or intentions. Our comforts are bought with the poverty and even the lives of beaten men and women.

THE INTERPRETER

"It is practically true, and ought to be true, that none of us can extricate ourselves from the social disgrace and pain until the whole social life is extricated. We cannot sleep, eat, wear clothes, travel, educate ourselves, read books, attend public worship, without participating in the social wrong and bearing the social guilt."

And another writer adds the same testimony:

"We can no more keep what we have than we can 'make a living' without taking advantage of the system of society founded, as it is, on injustice. Every one knows that if he is in business, he prospers only by taking trade from some one else; and that, if he is not in business, he lives as directly upon others as if he ate their flesh." And then he goes on to show how, in the complex social order, we are all involved in manifold injustices. "The paper on which I write," he says, "paid a profit to the paper trust, and the book reached you loaded with inflated charges of transportation companies. Each of these corporations, to which you and I have contributed, has the power to deprive men of liberty and of freedom to do right; forces them into various deceptions, oppressions and frauds, in order to advance its interests and to retain their situations. So we are compelled, and assist in compelling each other, to live in a state of war."

That there is much truth in all this, every conscientious person knows. The solidarity of condition involves all of us in equivocal and compromising situations. Every man is placed, very often, in circumstances in which absolute

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

truth and absolute integrity and absolute justice are very difficult to realize. To live in such a society as that which now exists and keep wholly clear from complicity in its iniquities is not possible. We are compelled to use goods and instruments and facilities which are more or less infected with injustice and cruelty. We are compelled to have social contact and friendly relations with people, much of whose conduct is reprehensible. To refuse to partake of an article of food unless you knew that no wrong had been done to any one in bringing it to your table, would greatly limit your dietary; to refuse to wear a garment unless you knew that no unrighteousness was woven into any part of its fabric, would leave you scantily covered; to travel on no public conveyance by which you did not increase the rewards of iniquity, would keep you close at home. And if you kept company with nobody who was ever unjust or unkind, you would have very few friends.

I cannot imagine that Jesus ever attempted to govern his conduct by any such rigid rules of behavior. Society was far less complex in his day than in ours, yet it must have been necessary for him, very often, to partake of food in whose preparation greed and selfishness had mingled; and to associate with people, both rich and poor, whose conduct was not blameless. To have kept himself free from all such complicity in the evil of the world would have been impossible; to protest against every form of it would have been unwise. He could not, thus, have formed the friendships by which his life was communicated and his kingdom

THE INTERPRETER

established. Doubtless he was brought into contact with much that greatly pained him; doubtless he thus seemed to approve of much that was abhorrent to him; but he bore this suffering silently that he might gain for himself and his message entrance into human hearts.

Nor can we charge him, in this, with being false to the ideal. It was the ideal that commanded him, that constrained him to do these things. This was part of his humiliation.

There were times when, against all this corporate wickedness of the world, his protest flamed; times when this selfishness and hypocrisy and cruelty of the world heard the thunders of his denunciation and felt the lash of his censure; but his judgment was reserved for the occasions when it was clearly called for, and could be made effective. If he had been constantly in arms against the environing evil, he would have found no place in human hearts for the good seed of the Kingdom.

What must have been impossible for Jesus in his day is no more possible for the best of his disciples in these days. We cannot avoid some measure of complicity in the surrounding social injustices and evils.

In view of this fact some faithless souls rush to the conclusion that it is useless to try to resist the evil tendencies; that since nobody can keep himself wholly clear from the social iniquities, nobody can be blamed for consenting to them and profiting by them. "It is all a matter of degree," they say; "there are no absolutely honest people; a little

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

matter of more or less is not worth making a fuss about; we may as well make the most of our opportunities."

But it must be noted that the difference between a forced and a voluntary complicity in the environing evil, is wide as infinity and deep as the bottomless pit. We cannot help being involved in this corporate injustice, but we can hate it and resist it, and lift up our voices against it. Whenever and wherever it is possible to make a protest effective our protest must be made. It must be evident to all men that we are not consenting to this wrong, that we are simply enduring it. We are all more or less implicated in these evil conditions; but the vital question for every man is what is his attitude toward them? If he regards them with toleration or complacency, if he is even willing to use them for his own aggrandizement, then the curse which they are calling down from heaven must rest on his soul; if he makes it clear to himself and to the world that they are abhorrent and accursed in his sight, his contact with them means no soilure to his spirit.

But there is a larger truth to which our thought must reach, if we are going to deal fairly with this question. We have been looking, thus far, upon only one side of the social shield, and we must not forget that it has two sides. The passages which I have quoted imply that there is but one set of forces at work in modern society, the malign and destructive forces. They assume that rapacity and greed are the only elements entering into industrial society, — or, at any rate, that they are so universally prevalent

THE INTERPRETER

that any contrary influences are practically negligible. The statement is distinctly made in one of the passages I read a little while ago, that the existing system of society is founded on injustice. Probably the writer is thinking of economic society. But I do not think that this is true of any existing system of economic society. A society founded on injustice could not endure. The foundation of our industrial society is justice; the principle of the square deal and the *quid pro quo* underlies it all. We have not undertaken to build up a social order upon the basis of wrong. We have never said one to another, "Go to, let us establish a social system in which injustice shall be the rule." Such a proposition would be as absurd, intellectually, as it would be morally abominable. On the contrary our social and industrial order rests upon the assumption that men will do right, that all exchanges will be fair exchanges, that the relations of men will be relations of mutual benefit.

So, to a very large extent, they are today. There is still a great deal of honesty and equity and fair dealing in the relations of men with one another.

It is true that under the tremendous compulsions of greed and covetousness this industrial system has been greatly perverted, and that the tendency now widely prevails for the strong to push the weak to the wall, and for the heartless and inhuman to trample under foot those whom they are able to overcome in the strife. But this is not, in anybody's view, the natural or normal

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

social system. It is a disordered and diseased social system.

If you say that competition is the law of the existing industrial system and that competition involves the destructive work which I have just been describing, I answer that competition, in the economist's conception of it, is rivalry of service, rather than a strife for mastery. No political philosopher would advocate war as the regulative principle of economic society. It is true that competition does, too often, degenerate into war, but that is not the conception of its function on which industrial society is founded or defended.

Nor is it, I repeat, true even of the existing industrial régime, that all its movements are malign and destructive. No more true is it that in the wider relations of men, all the influences and tendencies are toward evil. Evil is mingled through and through the whole social order; we are in contact with it everywhere; but it is not all evil; to assume that attitude toward it is a tremendous mistake.

The social system, the industrial system, like everything else in this world, is compounded of good and evil; the light and the darkness are struggling together for the mastery. Selfishness and heartlessness and greed are strongly intrenched in it, but justice and good will, and consideration and compassion, everywhere appear in conflict with them.

The fact is that the social system consists simply of human beings, men and women; and while human beings

THE INTERPRETER

are not all angels, neither are they all demons. There are all sorts among them; some are cruel, egoistic, rapacious; some are gentle, sympathetic, generous. Nay, in every character we find a great variety of elements; the good and the evil mingle and contend in every human life. The social system, the industrial system which is made up of such characters, is not wholly good nor wholly bad. It is a very mixed quantity. The malign and benign elements are striving together in it for the mastery. There is room in it for cupidity and brutality and wolfish raven; there is room in it for magnanimity and chivalry and Christly service. And they are all there. All the worst and all the best qualities of human nature find expression in this complex which we call the social system.

Nor am I by any means prepared to admit that the worst elements preponderate. On the whole I believe that, taking our social system as a whole, even as at present organized, truth and goodness tend to prevail over deceit and iniquity. On the whole I believe that in this present world, taking all its departments together — the business world, the professional world, the social world, the political world, — the powers that make for righteousness are proving themselves stronger than the powers that make for wickedness.

When this present world of ours — this American world — has any big question to settle, are we not pretty confident that if we can get it fairly discussed it will be settled the right way? Take the biggest question we have had to deal

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

with — the slavery question: did not the people prove, in their settlement of that question, that right was dearer to them than self-interest? Is it not so in every clearly defined issue? Are not justice and truth and humanity the prevailing forces in every such conflict? How is it now, in the struggle with predatory wealth? At every phase of this struggle does it not become increasingly evident that the people are bent on securing justice and righteousness?

In a keen article in the *Atlantic Monthly*, on "The Grilling of Sinners," Prof. Edward Alsworth Ross calls attention to "the popular error that society's castigation of the sinner is simply the assertion of the self-interest of the many." The people who are now undergoing social censure are disposed, he says, to plead that the uprising against them is inspired by selfishness of the crowd, who envy their prosperity. But this, he says, is "moral gangrene, so deadly that no one with the infection ought to have place or influence in society. The truth is," he continues, "law is shot through and through with conscience. The uprising against rebating or monopoly, or fiduciary sin, registers, not the self-interest of the many, but the general sense of right. To be sure, an agitation against company stores, or the two-faced practises of directors, may start as the 'We won't stand it' of a victimized class; but when it solicits general support it takes the form 'these things are wrong,' and it can triumph only when it chimes with the common conscience. In the case of child labor,

THE INTERPRETER

night work for women, crimping and peonage, the opposition springs up among onlookers rather than among victims, and is chivalric from the beginning. The fact is that the driving force of the great sunward movement now on, is moral indignation. Not one of the attempts to shackle the newer stripe of predators lends itself to interpretation in terms of self-interest. In every instance the slogan has been, not ‘Protect yourselves!’ but ‘Put down iniquity! ’ ”

That is the deepest fact of the existing social order. To say, therefore, that this order is “ founded on injustice,” or that its total product is cruelty, is greatly to misjudge it. It is still infested with many malignant wrongs; there is a tremendous battle, all the while, between the powers of good and the powers of evil; but it is not a losing battle, and there never was a day when its issue was less in doubt than it is today.

So we come back to the question from which we started: Is it true that the man who puts the first things first has no chance for his life in this present world? Is it true that fidelity to the ideal means, in all cases, martyrdom? Or is the assurance of Jesus true — that one who seeks first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness may trust that all things needful for the maintenance of the best life will be added unto him?

Of course we must make no sweeping generalizations. Fidelity to the ideal may cost any of us the loss of all things — life itself. For that sacrifice we must be ready.

PUT FIRST THINGS FIRST

None of us is guaranteed against it; to hesitate about it is to fall from the heights of integrity:

“ Though love repine and reason chafe,
There comes a voice without reply:
'Tis man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die.”

So long as this world is as badly out of joint as it is, fidelity to the highest we know may lead us up the steps of Calvary. That is where it led Jesus, and we must not be afraid to follow him. But martyrdom is not the normal outcome of the good life. It is the fruit of abnormal conditions; it is a remedy for social disease. Every one who thus suffers inspires those who look on with horror of the sin that causes the suffering, and makes it less probable that others will suffer. The fact that he would not save himself by apostasy, strengthens the faith of others, and deepens their hatred of the wrong that made him suffer. Slowly, thus, through the heroism of the faithful, life, with all its rewards and opportunities, is won for those who will stand fast for the ideal. And as the years increase the assurance strengthens that they who put first things first shall find all needful things added unto them. That surely must be the law of God's Kingdom. Those who would live the good life must have the chance to live it, else life is futile and meaningless.

This does not mean that all our cravings are to be gratified; it means that we shall have what we need. It certainly does not mean that we shall be billionaires; our

THE INTERPRETER

heavenly Father knows that we have no need of any such thing. But it is a fair assurance that since the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, those who seek to know his will and do it, those who seek to govern their lives by his laws, have better reason for expecting to live out their lives, and to know the fulness of life, than those who despise his laws and work to overthrow his Kingdom. That has always been true, I believe, and it is more obviously true to-day than it ever was before.

It was never so plain as it is now, that the way of righteousness is the way of life. There was a day, not many years ago, when there was doubt about this in many minds. The rewards of iniquity were flaunted in the sight of the populace and many eyes were dazzled by them. But that glitter is greatly blurred today; we are not so envious of the portion of the evil-doers as once we were; a clearer vision has come to us; the verb to succeed has passed into a new conjugation. And I hope that many of those who listen to me are ready to believe that there is, after all, no surer road to life and happiness than to put first things first, and to trust in the promise of the Father that all needful things will be added unto us.

XII

OUTDOOR RELIGION

XII

OUTDOOR RELIGION

On that day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea-side.—Matt. 13 : 1.

This was not an exceptional day in the life of the Master. I have taken this verse for my text because it is descriptive of his practise as a teacher. Nearly all his ministry was exercised out-of-doors. We know, indeed, that his earlier ministry he spoke occasionally in the synagogues, the meeting houses of the Jews, in the cities and villages; but these were open only on the Sabbath; we have a few instances of his teaching in the houses of his friends, and once or twice he spoke in the temple-court at Jerusalem; but whether that was under the cover of the porches or in the open space in front of the temple, we do not know. For the greater part, however, his teaching and preaching were in the open air. His first great sermon, as reported in Matthew, was on the top of a mountain — probably the Kurn Hattin, on the west of the Sea of Galilee. Often he was in the wilderness — in the uninhabited country, in the rocky fastnesses round about Judea, where the multitude sought him out and listened to his message. More often we find him by the lakeside, in Galilee, where steep and

THE INTERPRETER

curving banks formed a natural amphitheater on which his auditors sat while he found his pulpit in a fishing-boat which he pushed off a little from the shore. It is evident, from the narrative, that much the greater part of his public ministry was an out-door ministry. He must have lived and slept out-of-doors a good part of the time; and the congregations to which he spoke were probably too large to have been accommodated in any meeting houses then accessible. No structure of any sort was ever erected, so far as we know, for his use as a public teacher.

The climate of Palestine was favorable to such an out-of-door ministry, for from March to November there was little rain, the summers were warm and the air was dry. We associate the ministry of Jesus, therefore, with the open air. Probably it rarely occurs to us to picture him as speaking or teaching indoors. On the mountain top, in the Jordan valley, on the shores of the Galilean lake, under the shadow of a great rock by the wayside, we see him sitting in the midst of the throngs, some of them reclining on the grass, some of them leaning on their staves and listening to his simple and convincing words. The breezes are playing with his hair, the birds are chirping in the branches overhead, the little waves are rippling on the beach at his feet, the overarching sky bends down with its benediction. Some such scene as this naturally presents itself to our minds when we think of the ministry of Jesus in Judea and in Galilee.

I cannot help thinking that this fact has some significance

OUTDOOR RELIGION

for the lives of all of us. For the central elements in the life of Jesus were normal elements. It is not rational to say that his manner of life is in all respects to be slavishly imitated by all of us, for we cannot all devote three years of our lives as he devoted three years of his to public ministry; but when we find such a phenomenon as this open-air life and ministry of his, it may well suggest to us the value of life out-of-doors. To say the least, it must have been in harmony with his thoughts and purposes; he must have felt at home, when he was living out-of-doors; that kind of background set off the pictures he was making of the better life for men; these surroundings did not contradict but confirmed the lessons he was trying to teach. It might be interesting to read through the chapter of which the text is the first verse. And I think we may safely make him responsible for the suggestion, that for all men and women who wish to live the best lives, it is good to spend as much time as possible out-of-doors.

Very likely this may get to be, in some cases, a fad. It is hard to keep life free from fads. There is a bit of satire in one of the late magazines on "The Passing of Indoors," which may have some justification. Shelter and protection and warmth and comfort are not, surely, in this climate, to be undervalued. Indoors will continue to have its uses and its charms for all sensible people, and most of us, if we order our lives wisely, will spend most of our hours under shelter. Nevertheless there are large uses for out-of-doors — larger than most of us have hitherto known.

THE INTERPRETER

One reason why Jesus went out of the house and taught by the sea and on the mountain top is expressed in that great saying of his: "I am come that they might have life and might have it abundantly." It is entirely clear that he used that word life in its most comprehensive sense. He wanted men to be thoroughly alive in spirit and soul and body. "Wilt thou be made whole?" was his question to many an invalid. Whole men, men with every organ and every faculty in healthy and vigorous operation, were the final cause of all his endeavors. A large part of his work consisted in the repairing of broken frames and the replenishing of enfeebled powers. And I suppose that he knew by his divine intuition how much outdoor life was worth to the multitudes who followed him. They could not think healthily, wish worthily, choose sanely, unless their lungs were expanded with pure air and their veins were filled with red blood. By keeping them out-of-doors, in the open air, he helped many of them to win health and vigor, and made it easier for them to find the true path, to resist temptation, and to live good lives.

For similar reasons many of us find it profitable to live as much as we can in the open air. The fresh-air cure is something more than a fad; the soundest of hygienic principles is behind it. The primary physical need is air to breathe; there was good foundation for the belief which is embodied in many languages that air is life. In the old Creation hymn, it was when his Creator breathed into man the breath of life that he became a living soul.

OUTDOOR RELIGION

Of all the conditions of existence this is most immediate and imperative. We can do without food for many days; we can dispense with light for years, but air we must have in abundance, every minute. And there is enough of it. What a glorious provision is made for this our largest need! The planet is swathed in it, invisible oceans of it fill all the space round about us; we never find ourselves considering the possibility of the failure of the air-supply. The most important of all our needs is this, and the provision is most abundant; the wisdom and love of an infinite Giver are revealed in it.

Happily its pervasive power is as notable as its abundance. There are no spaces above or under the earth which it does not swiftly occupy; no enclosures into which it does not promptly find its way. It is difficult to create a vacuum. Into cellars and caverns and basements and windowless rooms it forces an entrance; it would be hard for any man to find a place upon the face of the earth where air was not.

Nevertheless, there are many enclosures where it does not exist in its purity; it is possible, by confining it, to poison it or devitalize it so that it shall fail to sustain life. And often the air which we breathe indoors, in our shops and stores and offices and churches and theaters and parlors and bedchambers, is so laden with noxious gases and so vitiated with germs that it fulfils very imperfectly its vital function. From all such perils our refuge is out-of-doors.

THE INTERPRETER

For the most part the great reservoir of life which encompasses the globe is kept pure and untainted. There are, it is true, sections into which men are discharging so much smoke and dust and poisonous vapor that the atmosphere becomes mephitic; and there are swamps and jungles where, for the want of human intervention, miasm is exhaled and the atmosphere becomes pestilential; but these are occasional and sporadic defilements; for the most part the outdoor air is pure and wholesome and life-giving. And when we go out under the open canopy and look up into the infinite blue, we have some sense of the greatness of his bounty who gives us life, and gives it abundantly. It is only twenty-five or thirty miles in depth, they say, this invisible ocean through whose transparent currents we gaze upward to the sun and the stars; only twenty-five or thirty miles in depth, but that would appear to be an entirely adequate supply for all the needs of dwellers on earth's surface.

The other vital physical need of human beings is sunshine. The need is not so instant, so urgent as the need of air to breathe, but for health and vigor and happiness it is imperative. It is easier to exclude it from our enclosures and habitations than it is to exclude the air, but we suffer if we deprive ourselves of it. We have substitutes for it by which we contrive to do much of our work, but it is not good for any of us to be strangers to the sunshine.

These, then, are two of the primal physical needs of human beings. If we are to have life and to have it abun-

OUTDOOR RELIGION

dantly we must have an unstinted supply of air and sunshine. And we find them in their fullness out-of-doors. It is only there that we can put ourselves within reach of the plenitude of this provision.

Many intelligent people are coming to understand the relation of this outdoor life to human well-being, and there has been within the past quarter of a century a great increase of the extent to which the well-to-do classes spend their time in the open air. All this is calculated to be beneficial, physically, and mentally, and morally. We can easily overdo the business, as I have said, for there are many precious occupations and interests which require sheltering roofs and enclosing walls; but there can be no doubt that the well-being of the race is promoted by keeping all the people well acquainted with God's great out-of-doors.

If we, who have some leisure to study the conditions of our own well-being, know that this is good for us, then we must be well aware that it is equally the need of those who are less able than we are to choose the conditions of their own lives. If men must have plenty of air and plenty of sunshine in order that they may have life and have it abundantly, then it behooves us to see to it, that so far as we can compass it by our social arrangements, all the people for whom we have any responsibility have free access to air and sunshine. Those who are doing the hard work of the world need these primal gifts of the Lord of life more urgently than any of the rest of us.

It seems almost a crime that any man should be obliged

THE INTERPRETER

to spend his days in severe toil, where air is tainted and sunshine never comes. Yet under present conditions it appears necessary that some should labor under this disability. The miners, underground, the stokers in the boiler rooms of the great steamships, and others on land in similar conditions,—are compelled to do their work away from the sunlight. I suppose that everything is done that can be done to keep them supplied with air to breathe, but even that is imperfectly accomplished, and the conditions under which their work must be carried on are at the very best deplorable. Society owes to such men a consideration and a sympathy which they do not always receive.

No man can compute the magnitude of the boon which is granted to those who till the soil, whose work is almost all done in the open air. But there is the great multitude of those who work above ground, and who work within enclosures, and who must live within walls and under roofs,—of them we must think. For we may have much to do in establishing the conditions under which they must labor, and it behooves us all to do what we can to get an adequate supply of air and sunlight into all the places where they live and work. These are vital needs, and so far as we have influence and power we must see that they are provided for our neighbors, and especially for those who are imperfectly aware of their value. Our civilization will surely prove to be a decadent civilization if it does not look out sharply for the vital needs of its toiling classes.

OUTDOOR RELIGION

And not only ought we to see to it that the enclosures in which men work, and the rooms in which they live are well supplied with light and air, we ought also to see that they have large opportunity of getting the full benefits of God's great out-of-doors. There is one thing which we can do for them and which, at no distant day, I am persuaded that we shall do, — we can give them not only pure water to drink, we can give them also purer air to breathe. One who sits in the top story of one of our tall buildings and sees the columns of black smoke rising all over our city, and who witnesses, as I did the other day, the onset of a windstorm which drives this smoke horizontally down upon the roofs and through the streets and thus blots from sight homes and stores and factories and churches, smothering them in its sooty embrace, has a conception of what we are daily breathing into our lungs and finding lodgment for on our walls and floors and book-cases. Some of us can get away from the worst of this nuisance, but there are many who must live in the midst of it. I am sure that the time must be near when we shall abate it. We know how to do it now; nothing is needed but that we should resolutely apply our knowledge. A good many of our fellow men have to content themselves with bits of outdoor life; we are bound to make those fragments as precious to them as they can be made. It is impossible that our neighbors should have life and have it abundantly so long as we are pouring into the air which they breathe such enormous quantities of carbon dioxid.

THE INTERPRETER

But it was not only for the health of their bodies that Jesus led his followers out-of-doors. It was good for their minds also, and for their souls, that they should spend some good portion of their lives in the open air. For our morbid sentiments it is medicinal, for our perverted ideas it is disciplinary to get out from between the walls within which we have immured ourselves into the open, and out from under the roofs that deny the sky to where there is nothing that can contradict the infinite blue. Nor is it essential that we surround ourselves with the more sublime manifestations of external nature, — with towering mountains or rolling oceans, or plunging cataracts.

Sometimes it seems to me that these exceptional phenomena rather stun and confuse our insights. I am not sure that out-of-doors is not worth more to us in its commonplace aspects — the green fields, the winding streams, the waiting forests, the birds in the copses, the sky and the clouds. No matter how barren the landscape, always there is the sky overhead, and where the earth is most sullen the smile of the sky is often loveliest. If you will only find a place where the mighty cope in all its breadth stretches above your head, and will simply lie down in the shade and let it speak to you, you may hear something greatly to your advantage.

No wonder the Romans came to identify the sky with deity and to call it Jove; when its searching eye looks down on a man he is humbled and made reverent. And how much there is in its most familiar aspects to kindle our wonder

OUTDOOR RELIGION

and our admiration! “The noblest scenes of the earth,” says John Ruskin, “can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should live always in the midst of them; he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he be always with them; but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not

‘Too bright, or good
For human nature’s daily food’;

it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart, for the soothing and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful, never the same for two moments together, almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential. . . . It is not in the broad and fierce manifestations of the elemental energies, nor in the crash of the hail, nor the drift of the whirlwind that the highest characters of the sublime are developed. God is not in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still, small voice. They are but the blunt and low faculties of our nature which can only be addressed through lampblack and lightning. It is in quiet and subdued passages of unobtrusive majesty, the deep, the calm, and the perpetual,—that must be sought ere it is seen, and loved ere it is understood,—things which the angels work out for us daily, yet vary eternally; which are never wanting, and never repeated; which are to be

THE INTERPRETER

found always yet found but once,— it is through these that the lesson of devotion is chiefly taught, and the blessing of beauty given.”

And if the sky by day with its blue infinities and its vapory traceries and its miraculous cloud piles can speak thus to our spirits, how much more solemnly by night do its inarticulate voices sound in the depths of every serious mind:

“Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain,
Clearness divine!
Ye heavens, whose pure regions have no sign
Of languor, though so calm, and though so great,
Are yet untroubled and impassionate;
Who, though so noble, share in the world’s toil,
And, though so task’d, keep free from dust and soil!
I will not say that your mild depths retain
A tinge, it may be, of their silent pain
Who have longed deeply once and longed in vain,—
But I will rather say that you remain
A world above man’s head to let him see
How boundless might his soul’s horizons be,
How vast, yet of what clear transparency!
How it were good to live there, and breathe free!
How fair a lot to fill
Is left to each man still!”

These summer days have great gifts in store for us if we can only put ourselves into the right attitude before these august instructors and let them tell us what we need to know. For they are our teachers, and we are not blameless if their counsel fails to find us.

“The heavens declare the glory of God
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.

OUTDOOR RELIGION

Day unto day uttereth speech
And night unto night showeth knowledge."

And though "there is no audible speech nor language, and their voice is not heard by the ear of sense," yet "their line is gone out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world." There is no place so lonely that we cannot hear these voices; when the din of traffic and the chatter of conversation are far away these revealing and quickening utterances begin to be audible,—never till then.

I greatly fear that many of us know far too little of the help that might come to us from these high sources. It is not often that we lift our eyes to the hills or to the sky; for such companionship we find ourselves strangely unfit. We are so constantly with others that we almost dread to be alone; it is a pitiful weakness; and thus we miss the profoundest and most momentous communications, for these only come to us when we are in solitude, and when the deep without is calling into the deep within. It is not an unkind wish for any of you, I am sure, when I say that I hope that all of you may find during this beautiful summer, many hours for silent and fruitful companionship with forest and field and river, with the glory of clouds and the steadfastness of stars and the strength and the peace of the everlasting hills.

XIII

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

XIII

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. — Luke 5 : 4.

Peter and James and John had been fishing all night in the Galilean lake, and had caught nothing. In the early morning their Master appeared to them, and using their boat for a pulpit spoke, for a little while, to a congregation which had gathered on the beach. “And when he had left speaking he said unto Simon, Put out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.” The result of obedience to that suggestion was a surprising haul of fishes. The fact seems to be that the fishermen had been hugging the shore and fishing in shallow water; when they got out into deeper water they found the fish.

This is sometimes described as “the miraculous draught of fishes.” There is no hint in the narrative of anything supernatural. If it was a miraculous occurrence it can have no lesson in it for you and me, for we know that no miracles are going to be wrought for us when we go a-fishing. I prefer therefore to regard it as a natural event; and to say that the poor luck of the fisherman was due to the fact that they had been fishing in the wrong place,

THE INTERPRETER

and that their big haul is explained by the fact that at the suggestion of their Lord they went where the fish were. Indeed, I prefer to use the incident as a similitude. I would not say that it teaches or was meant to teach the lesson that I shall draw from it; I only say that it aptly illustrates certain facts of human life to which I wish to draw attention.

The error and the foolishness of keeping too near shore, of dabbling in the shallows, when the depths are inviting us to braver enterprises and nobler gains — this is the significance I choose to find in the words before us.

It is clear that the fisherman may greatly err as these apostolic fishermen seem to have erred, by plying his trade in the shallow waters. The best fish are not found there. He may catch a few minnows in the coves and a few cunners from the rocks; but if he expects to win the haddock or the cod or the bluefish, he must go out to sea, beyond the line of the breakers. The counsel which the Master gave to his disciples embodies the wisdom which the fisher-folk in all the generations have gained from experience. This means more work, more risk, more exposure; timid folk and lazy folk are fain to keep near shore; but those who expect to succeed in their craft must not be afraid to put out into the deep.

Even to the swimmer this counsel is often wise. One reason why some people never learn to swim is that they never venture into water that is deep enough to swim in. They stand forever paddling and shivering in the water

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

that is only knee deep and never strike out into the depths where swimming is possible.

The navigators, also, have been admonished by the same maxim. For them there could have been no such conquests of space as they have won if they had hesitated to put out into the deep. For many ages, no doubt, after the first hollowed log floated the first navigator, the timorous sailors hugged the shore, and the coasting trade was the only maritime trade. Until the compass was invented, it was hardly safe to be out of sight of land. But navigation that is tied to the coast is flight with a clipped wing. It is dangerous, for one thing: rocks and shoals abound, and a stiff wind from the offing may at any time drive your craft upon the breakers. The one thing that the sailor is most afraid of is the shore with its shallows. He never feels safe till he is out of sight of land.

The great achievements, the great discoveries, the great additions to human knowledge and opportunity, are not for those who cling to the shore and the shallow water, but only for those who have the courage and the enterprise to launch out upon the deep. The old Norsemen who had won daring and hardihood by battling with wind and wave in their own tempestuous seas, and were thus emboldened to sail westward in search of other harbors; the Phoenicians, whose mastery of the Mediterranean had equipped and stimulated them to push beyond the Pillars of Hercules into an uncharted sea, were the protagonists of this enterprise of discovery, of which the great Genoese was the most

THE INTERPRETER

illustrious leader. What sent Columbus forth on his mighty errand? Knowledge and faith were blended in the impulse that moved him — the new astronomy which had convinced him that the earth was spherical, and that the east could be reached by sailing west, and the faith that he could open a new way to the old world, and add new kingdoms to the empire of the Christ. It was no narrow impulse of selfishness or greed that had stirred him up, it was a large thought and a great loyalty which were struggling together in his breast. These were the voices which kept calling him to launch out into the deep. That great venture upon an uncharted sea was vindicated in a marvellous way. In searching for the old world he found a new one, whose existence had been hitherto unsuspected by the wise men; he added a continent to the resources of mankind. But all this was the fruit of the impulse which lured him away from the solid land and the familiar shores, away into the unknown deep.

These illustrations will indicate that here is a law of life with which we may have to reckon.

It is not always wise or profitable — it is not always safe — to cling to the shores and the shallows; it is sometimes the best thing we can do to launch out into the deep. The instincts of prudence and self-preservation may powerfully dissuade us from taking that risk; but we have to learn that those instincts are not always our surest guides. I do not say that they are never to be trusted; they have their use; we do not well when we wholly despise their

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

admonitions. Here, as everywhere, we are beset with conflicting motives, whose action upon us we must learn to harmonize and combine.

It is a sane instinct which makes a human being dread the sea and cling to the shore; but it is a higher and diviner instinct which makes him look away to that far horizon and wonder what is beyond it, and resolve to know. The faith and courage which stir him up to defy the danger and despise the toil, that he may gain a good beyond his sight, are nobler elements than those self-regarding ones which would tie him to the land. His greatest gains have been won in such ventures. It is the divine voice which bids him forsake the shallows and launch out into the deep.

This is true of his intellectual life. As a thinker man stands on the shores of sense confronting an infinite ocean of being. He knows, or seems to know, the things that are revealed to him by his senses; and the inclination sometimes grows strong to make the senses the test of his knowledge; to bring all his experiences under their jurisdiction and to make them the arbiters of all truth.

There are thus a good many thinkers who insist on keeping very close to shore in all their thinking; they are only waders, or at best coasters, and they must stay where they can touch bottom; they are neither swimmers nor navigators; they have not learned to trust themselves to the depths. There are those to whom science means only what can be verified by physical measurements, what can be weighed or counted. Thus Mr. Huxley, in one of his

THE INTERPRETER

earlier addresses, quoted Hume as saying: " If we take in hand any volume of divinity, or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask: Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity, or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it, then, to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion." To which Mr. Huxley adds, " Permit me to enforce this most wise advice. Why trouble ourselves about matters of which, however important they may be, we do know nothing and can know nothing? "

I do not think that Mr. Huxley was always quite so near-sighted as this, but here he shows himself a very narrow thinker. This dictum of Hume's, which he so unreservedly endorses, is not, surely, what he calls it, "most wise advice." Take the Sermon on the Mount. It contains no abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number and no experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence. Shall we therefore say that it contains nothing but sophistry and illusion? Take the four chapters of John's Gospel beginning with the fourteenth; take the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians; take the Twenty-third Psalm or the One Hundred and Twenty-first Psalm, or the fortieth chapter of Isaiah,—and apply Hume's test to them. None of them can by any stretch of terms be brought within his categories. Shall we commit them all to the flames? Or take Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," and his "Ode to Duty,"

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

and Tennyson's "The Ancient Sage," or Browning's "Saul," or Lowell's "Cathedral," or Emerson's "The World Soul," — nay, take Emerson's essay on "Compensation," or "Spiritual Laws," or Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus"; you will not find in any of them "any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number," or "any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact or existence"; are they, therefore, unfit to engage the thoughts of rational men?

In truth the subjects which cannot be subjected to such tests are the very subjects best worth thinking about, and the people whose minds are always tethered to the things of sense are people from whom we need not hope to get any inspiring messages. It is not when the man is sticking close to the shores of sense and subjecting all his impressions to physical tests that the great words are being spoken to him; it is rather in those moments when, within himself, he perceives

"A grace of being finer than himself,
That beckons and is gone, — a larger life
Upon his own impinging, with swift glimpse
Of spacious circles luminous with mind,
To which the ethereal substance of his own
Seems but gross cloud to make that visible,
Touched to a sudden glory round the edge";

it is rather when he feels

"A presence that disturbs him with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,

THE INTERPRETER

And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

A man is a poor and dull thinker whose thinking does not bring his mind into contact with these things unseen and eternal by which his life is beleaguered. He is one of those who are quite too well content to wade in the shoals along the beach or paddle his canoe over the creeks and coves, and who does not trust himself to the great spaces of the rolling deep. For him there are no great discoveries; he will add no continents to the intellectual resources of mankind. It is only those who are not afraid to lose sight of land, and to sail away over the boundless deep of the eternal purpose, with only the stars overhead, to whom the great things of God are ever revealed.

"Scorning the narrow measure of individual wants," says Dr. Martineau, "human curiosity flies out, and with wing more eager as the air grows strange, unto fields remotest from the homesteads of personal and social life. To go forth and see where the stars are, and how they lie; to get round them and dive into the fountain of their light; to frustrate their eternal silence and make them tell their paths; to pass from station to station and gain assurance that there is no end to their geometry; and then to drop back on the grass-plot of this world, mentally sublimed by the sense of human insignificance, has ever had a solemn charm for human intelligence. . . . Carrying in ourselves

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

secret relationships with universal space and unbeginning time through Him that fills them both and lives in us, we know the tidings which come furthest from them to be nearest to us; they remind us of our augustest kindred; they free us from our momentary prison; they show us the white sail, they breathe on us with the very wind that shall take us out of exile. Their awful fascination bespeaks a nature mysteriously blending in its affections the finite and the infinite, and standing on the confines of both."

But the counsel of the text is most pertinent in its application to the moral realm — to the concerns of conduct and character. Here, more than anywhere else, the weakness and folly of clinging to the shore and dabbling in the shallows makes itself manifest.

Might we not truly say that the prime characteristic of much of our modern life is its shallowness? Is not this the trouble with the multitude; that there is no depth to their convictions or their affections? The Preacher, in the old Hebrew satire, represents himself as one who had gathered all kinds of material good and of sensuous pleasure, and who had found it full of emptiness; and he summed up all this experience of mammonism and sybaritism in the bitter words: "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labor that I had labored to do, and behold all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun."

The modern novelists are sometimes skillful reporters of social conditions and tendencies. In the words of

THE INTERPRETER

one of the witnesses to whom this high life has been familiar:

"It is this same amateurishness in everything,—this complete inefficiency, that is the dominant note of the lives and characters of our women of fashion. They can't sing, they can't dance, they can't act, they can't paint, they can't sew, they can't cook, they can't educate. They are inept, unthorough, inconsequential, rudderless, compassless, drifting. They don't know life, because they have never lived life. They are like perpetual typhoid fever patients, supported always on rubber water mattresses. Helpless, hapless, hopeless, nervous, disappointed, cloyed and cowardly, they exist a few years here, seeking to have all their living done for them by paid dependents.

"‘And yet,’ said one of the women who listened without dissent to their indictment, ‘there must be some strong, resistless fascination, under all this superficial, frothy glitter that draws us on. For even we, who in our hearts realize the inanity of the whole thing, yet patiently grind on until our last hours upon this weary, golden treadmill. Can you explain that?’

“[She] dropped her chin into her hand and thought. ‘I do not believe,’ she said, finally, ‘that its lure is so compelling because *it* is strong, as because *you* are weak. But that is not your fault. Life is so ordered for you that you have no chance to be anything but weak.’”

Is it not a melancholy picture of the kind of existence after which a very large part of the people of this land, rich

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

and poor, are eagerly reaching out? I suppose that many people have a notion that such life as this is ampler and wider than that of ordinary mortals; but the impression of its exceeding narrowness grows on one who reads these records. It is chained to earth. The conventions and exactions become cramping and tyrannous. It is a treadmill, as that victim confesses. These poor people are huddled together on the shores of life's wide ocean, upon whose depths of experience they never venture, whose wide ranges of pure enjoyment they never know. And before the end comes they are as sure as the preacher was in Ecclesiastes that there is nothing in it. The hero of one of these books thus confesses, on the last page. He says that he has made good in the great game of accumulation; he declares that he is "on Easy Street"; when his old friend challenges him:

"Look at me and tell me, now that you have achieved your heart's desire, if it has been worth while.

"For a long time he hesitated. 'No,' he answered, slowly and with reluctance. 'It has not been worth while. My whole life is a horrible lie, a poisonous blunder, a soul-destroyer. Sometimes I catch a vision of the truth, but always I turn away from it quickly, or I couldn't keep on.'

"Why must you keep on? Why don't you turn to the truth, even if you see it only sometimes? You will see it oftener as you move toward it.

"He shook his head. 'I can't. I know it's all rotten

THE INTERPRETER

and false, but it's too late to change. I am nearly forty years old. My life is settled; my ways are fixed. It is too late.' ”

Poor fellow! He has toiled all night and has taken nothing. And when the word comes to put out into the deep and let down the net in the great waters, his hope and courage are gone.

It is not, I fear, the denizens of the house of mirth alone to whom this truth applies. Few of us here belong in that class, though some of us, if the truth about us were known, would be mighty glad to get into it. But, if we have no such expectations, is it not true of many of us that we are altogether too well content to cling to the shores and the shallows of existence, and that we know far less than we ought to know of the great deep of human experience always inviting us and the rich islands and continents whose shores it washes.

Upon this strand of Time we sit and life, like a mighty ocean, rolls before us. That ocean represents to us the infinite wisdom and love of God. That great deep is always in sight; its buoyant waters invite us, its vast distances beckon to us, its tides of life are always breaking at our feet. To one who lives upon the shore of the Atlantic or the Pacific, that mighty expanse would surely be the greatest fact of his earthly environment. It would be always present; he could not ignore it; it would become a part of his consciousness. And so, it seems to me, it ought to be with all of us who stand forever in sight of the

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

Eternal. In that august presence we are always standing.
For all these things which we see are but the mask He wears;
the forces of nature are weaving the garment which con-
ceals while it reveals him,

“Earth, these solid stars, this weight of body and limb,
Are they not sign and symbol of thy division from him?

“Dark is the world to thee? thyself art the reason why;
For is he not all but thee, who hast power to feel ‘I am I.’

“Glory about thee, without thee, and thou fulfillest thy doom,
Making him broken gleams, and a stifled splendor and gloom.”

What a marvellous thing is life, this human life of ours!
How high are its relationships, how vast are its possibili-
ties. Now are we the children of God, and it doth not
appear what we may be!

“O Infinite of joy and light
Wherewith we are surrounded,
We lift our spirits to thy height,
Unfathomed and unbounded;
Thy greatness drowns our petty cares,
Thy heaven is in us, unawares.

“O Infinite of righteousness,
Breath of our inmost being,
Thy purity will cleanse and bless
The soul from evil fleeing;
We hide our sin-stained hearts in thee
And pray, ‘As Thou art, let us be.’ ”

Yes, that is what we ought to say; that is the right re-
sponse of the soul, when the greatness and the nearness of
God is revealed to the need of man.

THE INTERPRETER

But alas, how little these great things are apt to stir us. We are the children of Eternity, but we are investing all our resources in the things of time and sense, in the goods that perish with the using. “Deep calleth unto deep” is the Psalmist’s poetic confession. The ocean of being without appeals to the depths of life within. The macrocosm summons the microcosm. The Infinite of Truth and Goodness by which we are surrounded speaks to our consciousness in tones that ought to thrill us. Yet how heedless we are of this great appeal. Our ears are closed when its voices call, when its fair distances beckon our eyes are turned away. We are fishing for minnows in the creeks and coves, we are wading in the little pools that the tide has left along the beach. We are trying to satisfy our souls with interests that are of the earth earthy. It is not what we are made for; our destinies are cut to a larger pattern; our powers cannot find exercise in such an environment. It is like trying to run an electrical engine with the vapor of tepid water; it is like asking Curtis to fly his aeroplane in a Dutch barn; it is like trying to sail the *New Mexico* in Alumn Creek. The human soul was not intended to confine itself to such interests; it is tuned to larger harmonies, it is plumed for wider flights. “Thou hast made us for thyself,” cried Augustine, “and our souls are restless until they rest in thee.”

“Many a man,” says Professor Peabody, “is ineffective because he does not let down his nets as deep as they were meant to go. If, as he looks back on life, he were to

THE CALL OF THE DEEP

name his chief regret, it would be not so much his wickedness as his shallowness; the failure to use life at its best, the small use of the great opportunity, the dabbling in the shoals of experience instead of sailing into its deeps. He has sat on the shore of experience, timid, self-distrustful, indolent, fancying himself not fit to go far from land, and so all his days he has lived like a child playing in the sand, while men no better than he have done their business in great waters. To such a life comes this call of Jesus. This is not what you were made for. . . . One must take chances if he would use life for all it is worth. It is often as easy to do a great thing as a small one. Launch out into the deep."

I know not whether I have succeeded in making audible to any of you the call of the deep which summons us all to larger ventures and braver enterprises. I am sure that there is for you and me a better destiny than we have ever known, if we but dare to trust ourselves to God, and commit our souls with no reserve to his great purposes. It seems hard for us to cut loose from the land — to relinquish our hold on the small expediencies on which we have been resting, and make that great act of faith by which our wills are made one with the Perfect will; but after all, the ship was made for the sea, not for the dock; and the hour of her deliverance comes when the cables are loosed and she turns her prow to the dim horizon.

“To some thou givest at ease to lie
Content in anchored happiness;

THE INTERPRETER

Thy breath my full sail swelling, I
Across thy broadening seas would press.

“ At friendly shores, at peaceful isles,
I touch but may not long delay,
Where thy flushed East with mystery smiles
I sail into the unrisen day.

“ For veils of hope before thee drawn,
For mists that hint the immortal coast
Hid in thy farthest, faintest dawn, —
My God, for these I thank thee most.

“ Joy, joy! to see from every shore
Whereon my step makes pressure fond,
Thy sunrise reddening still before! —
More light, more love, more life beyond! ”

XIV
BLESSING AND BANNING

XIV

BLESSING AND BANNING

*And he opened his mouth and taught them saying,
Blessed. — Matt. 5 : 2, 3.*

Here beginneth “The Sermon on the Mount,” the first, the longest and the most comprehensive of our Master’s reported discourses. It has been described as the Magna Charta of Christianity; it certainly does set forth, with great fullness, the fundamental tenets of Christian faith and duty. What I desire to consider with you today is the first word of this sermon. There seems to be some significance in the fact that it is the first word. It has the emphasis of position. Those who heard this discourse could hardly have forgotten what was the first word of the first sermon. Within the next minute or two they heard this first word seven times repeated, each time the emphatic word of the sentence. It must have made a profound impression on their minds. They must have assumed that in this word they were listening to the keynote of this Teacher’s message. The word was “Blessed.” It was a benediction, a congratulation. It was a recognition of the good qualities in those to whom he was speaking a word of encouragement. May we not suppose that those who listened must have felt

THE INTERPRETER

that this preacher was fixing his eyes on that which was best in themselves, and drawing their own attention to it and giving them the meed of his approval? Must they not have gained the impression that the method of this teacher would largely be appreciation and recognition, rather than censure and denunciation.

That would, certainly, have been a different method from the one to which they had been accustomed. The law under which they had been living was mainly prohibitory. Of their decalogue all the commandments but one were prohibitions; and the tenor of all the teaching to which they were wont to listen was restraint, limitation, restriction. The greatest of the prophets was still speaking, and his message had been the fiercest reproof and denunciation. If he had found any good in the throngs whom he had been lashing by his invective he had forgotten to mention it.

The Baptist had borne the strongest testimony to Jesus, and those who had been the Baptist's disciples must have come to the ministry of Jesus with eager expectations, but they must have felt that there was a marked contrast between the spirit of the Forerunner, and the spirit of the Master. The one had come to ban and the other to bless. The essential characteristic of the one ministry was almost radically unlike that of the other. Nevertheless we must not forget that Jesus himself afterward bore strong testimony to the value of the ministry of John. He said that of all the prophets of the old dispensation, John was the last and the greatest.

BLESSING AND BANNING

Nor must we forget that elements of the ministry of John are found in the ministry of Jesus. Jesus sometimes found it necessary to invoke the severity of God as well as his goodness. Jesus sometimes denounced hypocrisy and selfishness in no measured terms, and brought the whole weight of his moral indignation to bear on men who were making void the law by their traditions and obstructing the progress of the Kingdom by their greed and their hardness of heart. So that we must learn to treat this matter with discrimination. We must not say that no words should ever be spoken to men but words of approval, for that is not so; there are things that must not be approved, that must be resolutely and unflinchingly opposed and condemned. There are times for banning as well as for blessing. "In our spiritual husbandry there are pests to kill as well as plants to cultivate. It is all a question of proportion."

The question is which method shall preponderate. Shall our chief reliance be on banning or on blessing. John's chief reliance was on banning, the chief reliance of Jesus was on blessing. And when Jesus says that John was the greatest of the prophets, but that the least of those in the Kingdom of heaven was greater than he, I suppose that he was thinking of just this difference, and that he meant to tell us that a feeble life whose strength was given to cherishing the good, was greater in God's sight than the most powerful life whose strength is spent in chastising the evil. And that I suppose, is the significance of these opening words of the great Sermon.

THE INTERPRETER

There is something very tender, very moving in that scene on the wide plateau, between the two peaks, the Horns of Hattin, which overlook the little Galilean lake. Jesus had spent the night on one of those eminences, praying; he had come down in the early morning to the level place on which the multitude had been gathering. The sun has climbed above the eastern hills, the waves of the lake below are dancing in its light, the birds are singing in the copses, the fresh breath of a summer morning is rustling in the grass. The throng has gathered there to listen to the Rabbi, and as he finds some elevated rock or grassy knoll, and seats himself, after the manner of Jewish teachers, there is silence. He bends forward, his hands are outstretched. Listen:

Blessed! Blessed! Blessed! Blessed! All the light of this beautiful morning, all the melody of these bird songs, all the perfume of these lilies of the field, are mingled in this benediction. It is the Word of God who is speaking, it is the Word of God that is spoken. This is his message to the children of men.

It is not a new message; we must not say that; for Isaiah and Hosea and many a prophet and psalmist had spoken it; but it is a new emphasis, and mighty things are wrought in this world of ours by changes of emphasis. And what I desire for you and for myself, is that we may catch the cadence of the Master's voice as he stands on the Mount of the Beatitudes, and get the tone and the meaning of it into our hearts. I wish that we could learn to know the

BLESSING AND BANNING

power there is in this attitude of mind, the convincing and persuasive force there is in this habit of speech, which praises, appreciates, congratulates, instead of censuring, condemning, denouncing.

Remember, remember, that I am not making any sweeping statements about this; sweeping statements generally sweep away a lot of precious truth. I recognize the fact that we shall be constrained frankly to disapprove and fearlessly to oppose many things and many people; I am only trying to see for myself, and to get you to see, that the staple of our teaching, and our preaching, and our work ought to be positive, constructive, helpful, friendly, rather than negative, critical, denunciatory; that it is far better for us and for the world that we keep ourselves in close and sympathetic relations with the good that is in the world, rejoicing in it, praising it, encouraging it, reinforcing it, than to be always watching and resisting and fighting the evil that is in the world.

I have had some fighting to do, in my time, and may have more to do before I die; and if I had to live my life over I would by no means agree to keep silent about abuses and to shut my mouth in the presence of iniquities and oppressions; but of this I am sure,— I would put a great deal more of my strength into the promotion and cherishing of the good that is in the world, and just as much less into the warfare with the evil that is in the world. I do not mean to admit that the larger proportion of my work has been on the wrong side of this proposition, for I believe that I have

THE INTERPRETER

always been convinced that positive methods are better than negative; but that conviction has grown and ripened with my years and is much stronger now than it was when I began my ministry, so that if I could live my life over, and could begin where I am leaving off, I should put a great deal less faith than I have done in banning, and a great deal more in blessing.

A good place to begin is in the family. In the treatment of our children appreciation and praise are far more effective than fault-finding. I do not mean that the firm hand of authority should be withheld; the weak indulgence which prevails in so many modern households is pernicious and fatal. The notion that children should never be taught obedience; that they should be permitted to overturn and destroy the order and peace of the household in the gratification of their own selfish impulses, is a pestilent heresy; it will undermine the family and civilization itself. But a spineless parental regimen is one thing, and a vigilant recognition of the good in the child's character and conduct is quite another thing. You need not relax your demand that he conform to the law of the household and the ways of honor and virtue; but you may show him that you are keenly watching for all signs of truth and fidelity and kindness and courage and nobleness in his life; that these are the things you expect from him, and that you are not surprised but glad and proud when they appear.

I have known few parents who held the ideals of good steadily before their children's minds, and kept watching

BLESSING AND BANNING

for their reproduction in their children's lives who did not sooner or later find what they were looking for. I have known some parents whom their neighbors thought almost infatuated, so confident were they of a good outcome from the lives of quite unpromising children; and I have lived to see the parent's faith fully justified in many such cases.

Watch for the good in your children's lives; watch for it, as the farmer watches for the wheat that he has sown and the corn that he has planted; have the same expectation about it that he has. Don't watch for the cockle or the Canada thistles; such things may appear but they are not the things that you ought to be looking for; if you have a theology that inclines you to look for them, get rid of it, and get hold of a theology that warrants you in watching for good in your children's lives, and when you see it praise it, rejoice in it, and cherish it by every influence that you know how to use. Whatsoever things pure, true, lovely, honorable, or of good report you find in the speech or the deeds of your children, be glad of it, and let them know your gladness. You need not be effusive in your commendation, but you can make them understand that their well-doing not only gives you the keenest happiness, but justifies your steadfast faith in them.

All of us know, alas, too many parents whose treatment of their children is precisely the reverse of all this; who are quick to see and reprove the evil, but slow to discern and commend the good; who seem to be watching for faults;

THE INTERPRETER

whose fears for their children's misdoing seems to be stronger than their expectation of well-doing. It is a melancholy and a fatal attitude.

O fathers and mothers, let us fill our minds with the spirit that finds utterance in this first word of the great Sermon! Let us stand always in the presence of our children in this hopeful rejoicing, praising attitude. I have told you more than once that the one thing that all of us most need to do is to get well acquainted with our own better selves; the next thing, for all of us who are parents, is to get well acquainted with our children's better selves; to put ourselves in closest fellowship with all that is best in their lives; to cherish it, to rejoice in it, to applaud it, to magnify it; to make it plain that we consider this better self to be the real self, and expect to see it prevail over any less worthy tendencies. We must not, of course, fail to correct the error and to reprove the evil; but let us make them see that

“ Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
Our faith, triumphant o'er our fears ”

are all with that better self whose fruits in their life and conduct are filling our hearts with happiness.

All that has been said about parents applies almost as closely to teachers. Many of them, I am sure, understand it perfectly. To Sunday school teachers, especially, it offers a most practical suggestion. And I do not know of any association of human beings in which it would not be

BLESSING AND BANNING

found to be the right attitude of mind. No matter with whom we may be keeping company the right relation to them, the Christly relation, is to be looking out for the good in them and to be glad when we find it. If we were living in a penitentiary or a workhouse, that I am sure would be the right attitude toward the inmates — to be vigilant to discern and commend all signs of good in their characters. If Jesus were here, we may be sure that he would get acquainted with the people in the Pen and in the Workhouse; and we can see him, who needed not that any should testify to him of man, because he knew what was in man, going about among these hapless people, and finding a word of blessing for every one of them.

“ You, poor fellow, are often ashamed and sorry for what you have been and done, your very shame and sorrow is a sign that God is with you, and the blessing of the poor in spirit belongs to you.”

“ And you are heavy-hearted because bad news has come to you from home; the God of all comfort is your friend.”

“ And you have been trying to fight down your resentful feeling; the blessing of the meek is yours.”

“ And you have been thinking that if you could be right and sound and clean, that would be the greatest thing in the world; God bless you; you shall have it if you want it,” — and so on and so on.

Do we not know that he would find the better self in every one of them and breathe new life into it? Mr. Jerome’s story and play, “ The Passing of the Third Floor

THE INTERPRETER

Back," — I have spoken of it before, but this is the place to speak of it again, — that mysterious personage who occupied the "Third Floor Back" was meant by the novelist to suggest none other than the author of the Beatitudes; and this was just his word to all those ugly, mean, cantankerous people — Blessed! He looked into the heart of every one of them and found something beautiful and good there and showed it to them, and that transformed their lives. The lesson of "The Servant in the House" is, of course, essentially the same.

There is no association of human beings, I say, in which this spirit and habit of mind will not be found the sovereign remedy for friction, and the solution of strife. Where men and women are working together, in the store, in the shop, in the factory, the spirit that is watching for the good in others, and rejoicing to find it, is the spirit that creates and multiplies good, and thus produces peace and welfare and happiness.

When human beings are mingling in the mill or in the mart, in the council chamber or in the state-house, those who are looking for evil in their associates will have no difficulty in finding it, and when they have found it, how little good it does them! If they would only learn of Jesus Christ to look for the good they would find that, and how much better it would be for them and all the rest of us! If the spirit of blessing instead of the spirit of banning could take possession of our lives, so that we should be prompted to watch for the good that we might rejoice in

BLESSING AND BANNING

it and praise it, what a different world this soon would be! And why not? Why not? Is there anything absurd or unphilosophical in such a suggestion? Is Christ's way of facing the world with a blessing instead of a ban the only irrational way, the only unpractical way? An apostle tells us that the right attitude before life is the rejoicing attitude. "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say rejoice."

But the normal life is spent among men; we are always in the presence of our fellows; and it is only by turning our thoughts away from the evil in their lives and fastening our faith on the good that is in them that we can keep in that rejoicing mood. The love that is the fulfilling of the law, Paul tells us, thinketh no evil and rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth. That is its habitual attitude before life.

Why is it that it has become the way of the world to reverse this attitude — and to assume — almost to assume — that every man is bad, until he has proven himself to be good. Is it not due in large part to a pessimistic theology which assumed that human nature in its best estate was totally depraved, and taught us to look for the worst in our neighbors instead of the best?

It is hard to unlearn that depressing philosophy, and to learn to look upon our neighbors in the light in which Jesus beheld them on the Mount of Beatitudes. But that is the lesson we have to learn, and the movement of the world out into the light and joy of the latter day waits on our learning it.

THE INTERPRETER

Most profoundly is it to be wished that the Christian church could be brought together on that Mount of the Beatitudes to listen to the voice of its Master and to learn from him how to say "Blessed!" — to make his benediction the burden of its message. Unhappily its tone has often been very different from this. It has been quite too much disposed to put the emphasis on banning the evil, rather than on blessing the good. This, perhaps, is largely due to that pessimistic theology in whose shadow, for so many centuries, it has been walking. Even in its evangelistic work it has often put so much emphasis on the evil in human nature that it was hard to find much foothold for the good.

I once heard an able and brilliant minister preach an installation sermon on the beautiful text: "Where sin abounded grace did abound more exceedingly," and he spent fully forty-five minutes in showing how tremendously and overwhelmingly sin abounded, and had but about five minutes left to tell about grace abounding; so that the whole effect of the sermon was exactly to contradict the text. But he was simply following the homiletical habit into which his studies had led him.

The consequence is that the church, in its attitude before the community often seems to be in a minatory and forbidding mood, assuming that its function is censorship rather than friendship; looking for things to reprove and correct more than for things to praise and promote.

I have tried to make it plain that there is work of this

BLESSING AND BANNING

kind to do, everywhere; and I am not proposing to muzzle the church in its testimony against social evils; but I do wonder whether in its administration of the gospel there has not been some loss of proportion here. Surely it must have something other and better to do than to forbid and condemn. It isn't all pruning and amputating and cauterizing; there is planting and watering and cultivating and fertilizing and nursing to do.

I am afraid that there are a great many Christians who think that Christianity, and in fact virtue, consists mainly, if not wholly, in being against something or other; that a church's efficiency can be estimated only by counting the number of things it is opposed to. It is all wrong; it is time that we were shown a more excellent way — the way of love, the way of affirmation and appreciation, the way of helpfulness. The church has expended most of its energies in works of reform; how needful it is that she should learn the wisdom of Horace Mann's maxim, that formation is infinitely better than reformation. We have been warring for a century against intemperance; I wonder if it would be possible for the church to understand that a better thing to do would be to promote temperance.

I suspect that that sentence would convey to a great many people no meaning at all. Yet I am sure that it does mean a great deal; and that the positive and constructive ways of dealing with this problem are the ways that the church must learn. Jesus said that merely to pull up tares is worse than useless; you root up the wheat

THE INTERPRETER

with them. Merely to cast out devils is poor policy; "when the unclean spirit goeth out of a man he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The church whose strength is spent in waging warfare on social evil is doing a losing business. She ought to be putting something better in its place.

In these Lenten days we are trying to clarify our ideas of what religion is, and how to strengthen its hold on our own lives and on the life of the church. Two weeks ago we found that the way to begin the religious life is to get better acquainted with our own better selves; since it is in our own better selves that God holds fellowship with us. Today we have seen that it is by getting acquainted with all that is best in other people, and cultivating that, that we do our best work in the world.

I hope that as a church we have some understanding of this principle and are disposed to build our life on it. We want this church to be a power for good in this community, and therefore we want it to keep itself in constant and vital contact with all that is best in the life of the community; to be in the closest sympathy with all who are working to make it a better community. We want to gather into it the people who believe in God and in men; who believe that

BLESSING AND BANNING

there is something godlike in all men, and who mean to keep their eyes open for that, and to rejoice in it; and we are sure that such a company of people can do much to bring the Kingdom for which we pray.

O fellow men, there is a great deal that is good in this world of ours, and the main business of every one of us is to get in touch with it, and fall in love with it, and fill our souls with the joy of it, and pour out our lives in the service of it. “Nearer, my God, to Thee,” we often pray; but are there any ways in which we can get nearer to him than by communing with all that is best in our own thoughts and wishes and by fellowship with the best that we can find in the lives of our fellow men? If God is in his world, that is where we shall find him, for he is not the God of the dead but the God of the living. And when we find him there and enter into fellowship with him there, we shall find in our own hearts the spirit that is slow to ban and swift to bless.

XV

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

XV

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

The subject on which I find myself announced to speak is “The Range of the Social Demand of the Gospel.” The phrase seems to assume that the Gospel makes a social demand, and it implies that this demand has a wide range. What is this Gospel? The first mention of it in Matthew describes it as the gospel of the Kingdom, and states that Jesus was going about in all Galilee, “teaching in their synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom.” It was evidently the burden of all his teaching and preaching.

One of his first general orders is the comprehensive injunction: “Seek first his Kingdom”—the Kingdom of God—“and his righteousness; and all these things”—all the things that are really needful, “shall be added unto you.”

What does this mean? I remember a day when it had no other meaning for me than to seek to secure my individual salvation from sin and death. I had a “never dying soul to save and fit it for the sky.” To do that was to seek first the Kingdom of God. If any one had spoken about the social demands of the gospel I should not have known what he meant.

THE INTERPRETER

Later there came a day when to seek first the Kingdom of God meant to make it my first business not only to secure my own salvation, but to promote in every possible way the growth of the local church of which I was a member. The range of the social demand of the Gospel was thus widening.

Later still the phrase began to include the increase of the membership and influence of the denomination to which I belonged, and still later the growth of all the organizations and agencies by which the church expresses its life.

It was a good while before I began to comprehend that this was not the whole of Christianity — not the whole of religion; that all this might be done and the great command of the Master remain undone; that the Kingdom of God was something bigger, broader, wider, deeper, higher, diviner than all the ecclesiasticisms. I have never wished to leave out of this injunction any of the things that my earlier thought included in it; but I have lived to see that the Kingdom of heaven comprehends them all, and a great deal more; that to seek first the Kingdom of God means not only to promote the interests which are recognized and labelled as religious interests, but all human interests. In fact, Christianity may truly say of itself what the old Roman said: "Nothing human is alien to me." The range of the social demand of the Gospel is as wide as the needs of humanity.

This is the truth which is meant to be expressed in this department of the work of this Council. It recognizes

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

the fact that the Kingdom includes the church, — that the church is a vital and essential part of the Kingdom; but it insists that the Kingdom is a great deal bigger thing than the church, and that the righteousness of the Kingdom is a larger kind of righteousness than the righteousness of the church.

What, then, besides the church, and the institutions and interests technically described as religious, does the Kingdom of heaven include? We may assume that it includes the universe; but we will not speculate on the religion or the politics of the other spheres. It is not the cosmos but the community with which we are now concerned. Considering yourselves as members of the civic community, the town or the city which is your home, what does the Kingdom of God, which you are to seek first, include?

It includes the government of your city or your town — all the civic organizations and agencies for the preservation of the peace and the promotion of public welfare that have their headquarters in the city hall. This is just as much a part of the Kingdom of God as the church is; it is just as dear to God as the church is; its functions are just as religious as the functions of the church. You are not a Christian if you do not cherish the civic institutions of your city with a passion as fervent and holy as that with which you cherish the life of your church.

“ If I forget thee O Jerusalem,
Let my right hand forget her cunning;
Let my tongue cleave unto the roof of my mouth;

THE INTERPRETER

If I remember thee not,
If I prefer not Jerusalem
Above my chief joy."

That was the way the old Psalmist felt about his city. Did you ever feel like that about Columbus or Los Angeles or Boston? God forgive you if you have not more than once! Your city is as dear to God as Jerusalem ever was, and it ought to be as dear to you as Jerusalem was to a Jew.

The Kingdom includes schools of all grades, all the educational agencies of the community. Can you imagine that these institutions, in which minds are disciplined, characters are built, souls are trained, have no part in the plan by which God is carrying on his work in your city? I am sure that any wise man who was seeking for the Kingdom of God in Los Angeles or Boston, would go, first of all, to the school-houses, and that any one who wanted to help in building the kingdom would feel that here was an agency with which he must closely ally himself.

The Kingdom includes the whole world of art. The ministry of beauty, in all its forms, is divinely ordained. He who hath made everything beautiful in its season is always at work, on the same lines. Beauty is one of his attributes, as well as goodness and truth; and he is always inspiring men to show it forth. This sacred thing, like every other sacred thing, can be profaned; but its essential nature cannot be hidden. And the kingdom of God which you pray for will not have fully come until your city is filled

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

with beauty, until devout men are singing in your streets, "*Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Minneapolis,*" or Detroit or Cleveland — wherever your home may be.

The Kingdom includes the ministry of joy. The realm of play belongs to it; it is as divine, within its normal limitations, as any other part of life. Don't you suppose that there will be playgrounds in heaven? Surely, surely! No man or woman of this generation who ever was a child could conceive of a heaven without playgrounds. Did you ever tell your children so? O tell them, tell them!

Nobody ever told me such a thing when I was a child. Nobody, I think, would have dared to mention such a thing then.

Well do I remember, when I was not more than six years old, thinking it all over. I liked to sing, and the only place I had heard of, where I wanted to be in heaven, was in the singers' seats; and I thought that I should like to sit there and sing for — oh, for — may be — about sixty years; but that was the limit; I feared that I should be tired of singing by that time and should want to go out and play, and *where could I go?* The only place outside of heaven that I had heard of was a place without playgrounds. Playgrounds in heaven? Heaven forbid! I could not have dreamed of a thing so impious! Tell your children that there will be playgrounds in heaven, and when you pray that the Kingdom of heaven may come to your city, never forget to include that in your petition.

THE INTERPRETER

The Kingdom includes, of course, all the philanthropies, all the institutions and agencies of compassion, all the expressions of pity and sympathy, all the ministries of human kindness. When you pray for the coming of the Kingdom, you desire, of course, that the sum of suffering and misery may be reduced; and believe that it will be; but inasmuch as poverty and pain and sorrow are likely to be with us for a good while yet, the Kingdom of heaven must make room for all those services of love by which burdens are lifted and wounds are assuaged and hearts are comforted. A great city in these days is full of this beneficent work, much of it under the care of the churches, much of it outside of them, but all of it a bright and blessed sign of the presence of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom includes the whole realm of industry and trade — the farms, the ranches, the factories, the mills, the furnaces, the banks, the stores, the organizations of finance and traffic and labor; they are as much a part of the Kingdom of God as the churches and the Sunday schools. What kind of a Kingdom of God would it be that left all this mighty economic realm outside? The fact that Mammon claims it, and disfigures and defiles it, and that much of it submits to his sway, does not make it his; he is a usurper; it all belongs to God; it is all under spiritual law; and the first business of the church is to assert his claim over it all and to proclaim and enforce his law. A very large part of what is meant by seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness is seeking to bring this

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

whole realm of business and finance and labor under the law of the Kingdom, which is the law of good will.

Finally, for I cannot extend this analysis, the Kingdom we seek includes not only all the industrial and social and civic organizations and institutions, and groups and interests which I have mentioned, it includes all the people, young and old, rich and poor, good and bad, black and white, native-born and foreign-born, all the people of the city. They are all included under the benign sway of the King of love; how could any one be counted out? His authority is over all, his providence embraces all, his fatherly love yearns over all, his law of good will is binding upon all. Many disobey it, but they are all subject to it and the penalty of disobedience is always enforced; no one ever disobeys it without being made worse by his disobedience. It is the law, the law of the life of this community; obeyed, it brings order and health and prosperity and happiness; disobeyed, it brings confusion and weakness and want and misery; it is the law of this community, and of every community under the sun, was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, Amen. When we pray that this Kingdom may come, we do not, if we are intelligent, imply that this law is not in force; we pray that it may be recognized as the law; that it may have its rightful supremacy over human thoughts and wills.

For the Christians of your town or city to seek first the Kingdom of God would be, then, to wish and pray and work

THE INTERPRETER

that the government of your city may be conformed to the law of the Kingdom; that the schools and colleges may lead the youth into the way of the Kingdom; that your art may be inspired by a vision of the Kingdom; that your play may reflect the joy of the Kingdom; that your charities may reveal the compassion of the Kingdom; that your business may illustrate the cooperations of the Kingdom; that your people may live in the life of the Kingdom.

We are talking about federating the churches of our towns and cities. This, if I understand the matter, is substantially what the federation of your churches means. They have heard the call of the Kingdom, and are rallying in response to that call. They have caught the vision of a community bound together by the bonds of brotherhood, ruled by the law of friendship, creating and sharing a common good. They believe that every city can be and ought to be a holy city, a city of God.

If the churches of your city can only seize this great hope and hold it aloft, and have their hearts kindled by it, and pour their energies into the realization of it, is it not credible that the days of dearth and solicitude of which you now complain would soon be past; that the sluggish tides of church life would be replenished, and that the multitudes now alienated would come thronging back into their gates? Can you imagine that churches on fire with the passion of the Kingdom would be complaining of waning influence or shrinking membership rolls?

Do you say that this hope of a community of good will

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

is a visionary conception — something far in the future? Well, it is just as far away as our faith puts it, and just as near at hand as our faith brings it. It would be here tomorrow if the churches of your city believed in it. And I want to tell you that there are a good many people in this country today, outside the churches, who are beginning to believe in it. Listen to these words:

There is one way of dealing with the social problems — “the way of the loving, gentle, great prophet of Nazareth. We have tried every way but that, we have sampled every other social philosophy but His, and haven’t rung many bull’s eyes yet.

“ His philosophy was the only one that ever did succeed, and, do you know, it wouldn’t surprise me a bit some day to see the good old United States quit all its conceited and fiddling experiments with vice and crime and acknowledge that it’s the only one that ever will.”

Do you recognize the voice? Well, it is the voice, barring the brogue, of Mr. Dooley. He is not, as you are aware, a sentimentalist, but he is a philosopher, with a vision as clear as any of his guild.

Is it really true that the Church of Jesus Christ thinks that God’s Kingdom cannot come, and that his will cannot be done in earth as it is in heaven? Let me tell you something. There are a good many Socialists who think that it can. A good many of them have a tremendous faith in the coming to pass of the very thing that we have been looking at — essentially, the very thing.

THE INTERPRETER

Most of them think that it can be brought in by economic or political machinery. That is their error. They think that they can build economic socialism on moral individualism. It never can be done. There is a more excellent way, and they will never prosper till they find it. But they are not wrong in thinking that the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. And for Socialists who see the Kingdom, and are seeking it with all their hearts, even by inadequate methods, there is more hope than for Christians who do not see it and have no heart to seek it.

Does any one protest against substituting sociology for religion? Nay, this is nothing of the sort. Let us not use words to confuse thought. Is seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness sociology? If it is, it is a kind of sociology of which no disciple of Jesus ought to be afraid.

"We do not want," says Walter Rauschenbusch, "to substitute social activities for religion. If the church comes to substitute social activities and doings, because its religion has become paralytic, may God have mercy on us all! We do not want less religion; we want more; but it must be a religion that gets its orientation from the Kingdom of God. To concentrate our efforts on personal salvation, as orthodoxy has done, or on soul culture, as liberalism has done, comes close to refined selfishness. All of us who have been trained in egoistic religion need a conversion to Christian Christianity, even if we are bishops or theological professors. Seek ye first the Kingdom of

THE CALL OF THE KINGDOM

God and God's righteousness, and the salvation of your souls will be added unto you. . . . A religion which realizes in God the bond that binds all men together, can create the men who will knit the social order together as an organized brotherhood."

If the churches of your city, gathered in a federation, could but get the vision of this divine possibility, and with one heart and one soul could throw their energies and their resources into the realization of it, no one can tell what the issue might be. With such a work on its hands and such a fire in its heart, the church would get attention to its message; the carping voices would be silenced; the chasm which divides the working classes from the church would shrink to a fissure; men would cease to think of God as careless or unkind; the Brotherhood, when we realize it, will prove the Fatherhood.

A light like this could not be hid. If the churches of one city began to seek first the Kingdom of God, the story would spread; glorious things would be spoken of that city; other cities would be caught by the flame; for this is a good that cannot be monopolized; you could no more stop it once it was started than you could stop a prairie fire; and the area of good will would soon be nation-wide.

And it is coming. It must come. There is no other way for the children of men to live together. This dreadful war is the expiring spasm of the individualism which culminates in militarism and nationalism, and threatens the extinction of the race. God has something better for the

THE INTERPRETER

world than this. This is the time to believe it. If we ever doubt it, may God forgive our faithlessness! Lift up your hearts, O beloved! It is nigh, even at the doors!

“O beautiful for patriot’s dream,
That sees beyond the years
Thine alabaster cities gleam
Undimmed by human tears,—
America! America!
God shed his grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood
From sea to shining sea!”

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be
taken from the Building

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9
10	11	12
13	14	15
16	17	18
19	20	21
22	23	24
25	26	27
28	29	30
31	32	33
34	35	36
37	38	39
40	41	42
43	44	45
46	47	48
49	50	51
52	53	54
55	56	57
58	59	60
61	62	63
64	65	66
67	68	69
70	71	72
73	74	75
76	77	78
79	80	81
82	83	84
85	86	87
88	89	90
91	92	93
94	95	96
97	98	99
100	101	102
103	104	105
106	107	108
109	110	111
112	113	114
115	116	117
118	119	120
121	122	123
124	125	126
127	128	129
130	131	132
133	134	135
136	137	138
139	140	141
142	143	144
145	146	147
148	149	150
151	152	153
154	155	156
157	158	159
160	161	162
163	164	165
166	167	168
169	170	171
172	173	174
175	176	177
178	179	180
181	182	183
184	185	186
187	188	189
190	191	192
193	194	195
196	197	198
199	200	201
202	203	204
205	206	207
208	209	210
211	212	213
214	215	216
217	218	219
220	221	222
223	224	225
226	227	228
229	230	231
232	233	234
235	236	237
238	239	240
241	242	243
244	245	246
247	248	249
250	251	252
253	254	255
256	257	258
259	260	261
262	263	264
265	266	267
268	269	270
271	272	273
274	275	276
277	278	279
280	281	282
283	284	285
286	287	288
289	290	291
292	293	294
295	296	297
298	299	300
301	302	303
304	305	306
307	308	309
310	311	312
313	314	315
316	317	318
319	320	321
322	323	324
325	326	327
328	329	330
331	332	333
334	335	336
337	338	339
340	341	342
343	344	345
346	347	348
349	350	351
352	353	354
355	356	357
358	359	360
361	362	363
364	365	366
367	368	369
370	371	372
373	374	375
376	377	378
379	380	381
382	383	384
385	386	387
388	389	390
391	392	393
394	395	396
397	398	399
400	401	402
403	404	405
406	407	408
409	410	411
412	413	414
415	416	417
418	419	420
421	422	423
424	425	426
427	428	429
430	431	432
433	434	435
436	437	438
439	440	441
442	443	444
445	446	447
448	449	450
451	452	453
454	455	456
457	458	459
460	461	462
463	464	465
466	467	468
469	470	471
472	473	474
475	476	477
478	479	480
481	482	483
484	485	486
487	488	489
490	491	492
493	494	495
496	497	498
499	500	501
502	503	504
505	506	507
508	509	510
511	512	513
514	515	516
517	518	519
520	521	522
523	524	525
526	527	528
529	530	531
532	533	534
535	536	537
538	539	540
541	542	543
544	545	546
547	548	549
550	551	552
553	554	555
556	557	558
559	560	561
562	563	564
565	566	567
568	569	570
571	572	573
574	575	576
577	578	579
580	581	582
583	584	585
586	587	588
589	590	591
592	593	594
595	596	597
598	599	600
601	602	603
604	605	606
607	608	609
610	611	612
613	614	615
616	617	618
619	620	621
622	623	624
625	626	627
628	629	630
631	632	633
634	635	636
637	638	639
640	641	642
643	644	645
646	647	648
649	650	651
652	653	654
655	656	657
658	659	660
661	662	663
664	665	666
667	668	669
670	671	672
673	674	675
676	677	678
679	680	681
682	683	684
685	686	687
688	689	690
691	692	693
694	695	696
697	698	699
700	701	702
703	704	705
706	707	708
709	710	711
712	713	714
715	716	717
718	719	720
721	722	723
724	725	726
727	728	729
730	731	732
733	734	735
736	737	738
739	740	741
742	743	744
745	746	747
748	749	750
751	752	753
754	755	756
757	758	759
760	761	762
763	764	765
766	767	768
769	770	771
772	773	774
775	776	777
778	779	780
781	782	783
784	785	786
787	788	789
790	791	792
793	794	795
796	797	798
799	800	801
802	803	804
805	806	807
808	809	810
811	812	813
814	815	816
817	818	819
820	821	822
823	824	825
826	827	828
829	830	831
832	833	834
835	836	837
838	839	840
841	842	843
844	845	846
847	848	849
850	851	852
853	854	855
856	857	858
859	860	861
862	863	864
865	866	867
868	869	870
871	872	873
874	875	876
877	878	879
880	881	882
883	884	885
886	887	888
889	890	891
892	893	894
895	896	897
898	899	900
901	902	903
904	905	906
907	908	909
910	911	912
913	914	915
916	917	918
919	920	921
922	923	924
925	926	927
928	929	930
931	932	933
934	935	936
937	938	939
940	941	942
943	944	945
946	947	948
949	950	951
952	953	954
955	956	957
958	959	960
961	962	963
964	965	966
967	968	969
970	971	972
973	974	975
976	977	978
979	980	981
982	983	984
985	986	987
988	989	990
991	992	993
994	995	996
997	998	999
999	999	999

